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# FANNY.

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## ERNEST FEYDEAU.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATEST FRENCH EDITION. '

## London:

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1888.

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I AM certain that if Sir Walter Scott and De Balzac had taken it into their heads to write their memoirs, and especially if they had faithfully recorded in them everything of interest that they could tell the public with respect to the composition of their admirable novels, we should be far less exposed than we have been for twenty years past to the reading of a large number of badly written books; while the young people who look forward to a literary career would, instead of dissipating their energies and talent as they do, emaciating and emasculating themselves by hasty productions having only the remotest affinity with literature, at last be in possession of such a grammar as would teach them the elements of art, and spare them painful gropings.

I am very far from attaching to my books—even through modesty—the importance which the entire world will always assign to the works of the two writers whom I have just named; but I am convinced that there will at all times be something useful for the world to learn in the most insignificant productions of every writer who treats his art seriously. It is on this score alone that—disregarding the feeling of repugnance which I feel at the thought of occupying the public with my own personality—I am going to try to settle a question which twelve years ago made some stir in the salons and critical world, and which I should have allowed to rest with the many others which are more interesting to myself than to anyone else, if M. Sainte-Beuve, one of my best friends, had not very shortly before his death dissuaded me from my purpose. I speak of the origins of my first novel, of the book to which the little, and all the little, of what I am is due-of "Fanny."

When I published this first "study," which was to bring so much abuse upon me, and by way of compensation make me so many enemies—who have done me good service—criticism at once manufactured an opinion concerning its production, an absurd opinion, showing superabundantly how little these clever men, who pretend to teach us our trade, are acquainted with it themselves. This opinion

was that the author of the new novel could be nothing but a "worthy young man" who had met with "the adventure on the balcony," and who, probably to console himself, found nothing better to do than to relate it to the public.

I shall not here give the psychological arguments which prove to demonstration that the sufficientlycontemptible and ridiculous action attributed to me is simply impossible. This would take me too far afield, and would, moreover, lead me to drop the conversational tone which I desire to preserve in these intimate disclosures. The critic Rigaud—he has died of it since—then ruled over the Journal des Débats in all the glory of his pedantry. He was not satisfied with making the above-mentioned foolish accusation against me; he went beyond it, declaring that such a "tale" could not have been invented by a man of letters, for intuition could not go so far. Then dwelling on this assertion, which his immunities as a critic gave him no authority to make, he unkindly insinuated that I was not even so much as the hero of the adventure, but simply the confidant of that hero and his avenger. Now, at the period when I published "Fanny," in the month of May, 1858, I numbered neither more nor less than thirty-seven summers, a very fair total for a "worthy young man;" I had been married for twelve years; I had, in short, had experience of life in its severest and most cruel aspects.

As for the illusions which constitute the torment of Fanny's lover, I shall not affirm that I have never shared them in my tenderest youth, but I am able to say that they had been left far behind on the day when I wrote the first line of my book. The truth is that the adventure in question, taken in its entirety, in its philosophic and physiological deductions, and in its logic, had never happened either to myself or to anyone of my acquaintance. None the less do I maintain that the important fact in the book. the brutal fact stripped of all its details, the fact which must alone have decided the success of the publication, restoring, as it did, reality to the situation of adultery, which—perhaps designedly had hitherto been disguised, none the less, I say, has the torment of adulterous lovers-in other words, the groundwork, the MORALITY of the adventurebecome a sort of common-place, so often must it have reproduced itself. "It's the history of us all,

the history of everybody that you have related," was one day said to me by the Duc de Morny, who had seen many colours in his life. "So I flatter myself," I replied, with all the immodesty of which I am capable.

And that was, no doubt, the reason why the public was taken by it.

But does it follow that because I repel with all my strength, as I should repel an accusation of cowardice, the imputation of having, by the publication of "Fanny," divulged an adventure which had befallen me in conjunction with a woman, I claim to have invented everything in the book, to have drawn nothing in its composition from my character, my youth, my passions, my habits, my weaknesses? Clearly not. If the public, which has a continually increasing curiosity concerning what goes on behind the scenes in all the arts, does not know this, it is well to teach it that art is not the reproduction but the imitation of nature; that the artist, though a creator, is not God, and that even when he creates he can produce nothing except from himself.

The only question now between the reader and myself is to determine in what proportion the groundwork, the characters, and the various incidents of "Fanny" have been observed or invented; what those incidents are which belong to myself alone; how, why, and on what occasion the idea of the book entered my mind, took root there, and developed. I still believe that such an inquiry will be of interest, and will injure neither the future of the book nor myself. For this reason I shall undertake it without any concealment or contrivance.

And first, as to the mother idea.

Here, at the outset, I am obliged to enter upon the path of retrospective personal recollections.

I do not know very pertinently—that is to say, by experience, although I have not shrunk from delivering myself on this matter in some of my novels—what are the manners, the modes of thought and feeling, and the genuine passions of the most youthful among the young people of the present epoch. The men belonging to the generation which came into the world between the years 1815 and 1830 are far better known to me. I am one of themselves. We had certainly our faults, but we had also our good qualities. Of these, one of the greatest—one which future generations must recognise in us if they are

not altogether devoid of justice—was the love of distinguished things, the taste for "good form" and for distinction, which led us in our loves—I do not say "in our fancies"—to scorn grisettes, chambermaids, lorettes, and lasses born in the remotest confines of the civilized word, in favour exclusively of women who, by their birth, their habits, and their education, approximated to a certain ideal of grace, propriety and seductiveness, and were truly worthy to bind us, as my grandfather used to say, "to their chariot-wheels."

Before taking "important steps" to win one of them, we went to the pains of paying our court to her. Now-a-days, I am told, five will combine for the purpose of keeping a woman. We should have blushed at the bare idea of voluntarily sharing the favours of a sweetheart even with the Pope himself. There was, however, invariably "a particular individual" with whom we had to reckon without acknowledging the fact to ourselves—the husband. But we habitually found means for evading any mortification that a situation of the kind had for us. It is true that when he came in somewhat late of an evening we were obliged to crouch in the recesses of

a cupboard; but then some one generally came to keep us company there. Sometimes he took advantage of us after the manner of those who throughout life seek to profit as much as possible by every situation, even by such a one as well-bred people ought to be content with suspecting; looking down upon us from his elevation as a husband, making us execute his commissions, and often going near to inviting us to pull off his boots. But we were compensated for all these slight annoyances by the tête-à-tête. Nevertheless, even when he did not inspire us with jealousy, he existed in our eyes not under the form of the ridiculous character of comedy, but as a man upon whom we were in a measure dependent, who held our happiness in his hands, who had it in his power to impede our appointments, to coarsely or dramatically interrupt our connection, in short, to molest us, to humiliate us, to annoy us in a thousand ways.

Thus, in my youthful imagination, the husband, the unfortunately obligatory complement of every intrigue, was not as yet a terrible, sinister being; but he was not ridiculous, he had to be reckoned with. That is one point gained.

Let us pass on to the second.

One day, as I was crossing the Boulevard des Italiens, in the neighbourhood of the Turkish Baths, since pulled down, I witnessed an atrocious scene which will never fade from my memory. A tall. strong man, of about forty years of age, elegantly dressed, and with a rosette in his button-hole, meeting in the crowd another man, evidently belonging like himself to the class of "well-bred people," raised his hand against him without uttering a word, and struck him violently. The man assaulted, instead of retaliating, as all the spectators expected, contented himself with folding his arms, looked proudly at the man who was hitting him, and, following herein the precept of the Gospel, appeared to be waiting for the other to renew his attack. And he did! It lasted for more than a quarter of an hour. The more heavily the blows were rained—and always on the cheek with the open hand—the more did the singular man who received them, clenching his fists, clenching his eeth, frightful in his stoicism, persist in abstaining from retaliation. Some passers-by at last interfered. and, separating the two men and sending them off in

opposite directions, succeeded in putting an end to the blackguardly scene. For myself, wishing to be in the secret, I searched the crowd for someone capable of giving me information. This was, happily, not difficult, for it was the hour at which the Bourse empties itself, and all the chatterers in Paris were there, with the curious. The giver of the blows was a member of high financial circles, and had the happiness of being husband to one of the most beautiful and most recognised women in society.

The other, the wretch whom he had settled so well, had for twenty years been his intimate friend. As may be supposed, the latter had not failed to debauch the wife of the former, who, in the end, had discovered everything. Inde iræ. Between this and the launching out into such violence as that which I had just witnessed, there intervened but the thickness of an opportunity. And, in spite of his brutality—nay, by reason of it—this frightful husband, who breathed not a word, and who struck so hard, raised in my young observant soul Georges Dandins, a thousand cubits high. The denouement of the whole affair, which I was to learn later on, though it took nothing from the character of

the outraged husband, was singularly to redeem the too Christian humility of his intimate. The latter was a member of an aristocratic club, where his adventure, as soon as it was known, made an enormous sensation. On the evening of the same day, the president of the club sent for him, told him that, after the forbearance which he had displayed on the Boulevard, he could no longer make one of an association of gentlemen, and that, in consequence, he invited him to be so kind as to give in his resignation.

But the other—still stoical—replied:

"Sir, special considerations of the gravest nature, with which I consider it needless to acquaint you, compel me to deprive myself of the pleasure of calling to account the person who insulted me to-day. But between yourself and me these considerations do not exist. You have just spoken to me in a tone which I consider offensive to my dignity, and you shall give me satisfaction for doing so."

Is it now understood how the situation of the eternal trio—'tis as old as the world—of the trio composed of wife, husband and lover, far from remaining conventional, stereotyped, as it had

never ceased to be since, following Boccaccio, the story-tellers of the Renaissance had made it so, was at last in my mind assuming reality? The lover remained in a fine light with his seductions—for if there were none of these where would be the reason of his existence?—and the husband was for the first time formidable in his sole capacity of husband, without any recourse to daggers or poison. As for the wife, the hour had come when day was at last to dawn before my eyes on the most seductive of the three characters.

In the house in which I dwelt there was at that time—be easy, fair readers, I shall mention neither street nor number—there was a young and beautiful woman whom I often perceived at her window, and with whom—my age, opportunity, and vocation assisting me—I had entered upon one of these charming relationships wherein the eyes have more occupation than the lips, relationships which cause keen regret for youth, and which I have sought to detail in the early chapters of my novel entitled "Tragic Loves." Of the age, face, figure, character and position of this lady I shall here say nothing to the reader, for this would only cause me to digress

from my subject; what it is important that he should know forthwith is that, at the end of four months, I knew nothing about this charming woman, not even her name, having as yet spoken to her only on the staircase of the house in which we were living. What I said to her requires no commentary, and may be translated by all the various readings imaginable of the pretty phrase, "I love you." Nevertheless, her manners, her gait, her language. even her dress, and especially a certain experience of things which was visible in her, and which added no little charm to our incipient relations, rendered it easy for me to perceive that she was married, and that I had not to do with a young girl; but, had I been offered the throne of France and the hand of the most seductive woman in the world into the bargain, it would have been impossible for me to give the slightest information respecting the person of my beloved's putative husband.

But one morning, as I was leaning on the railing of my balcony, lying in wait for the pretty face which I was in the habit of encountering on the story below, I perceived, not the white skin heightened deliciously by fine, black hair, the pretty chestnut

eyes, the vermilion lips, in short the arch countenance that was wont each day to plunge me into lengthened ecstacy, but—horror!—a smoking cigar, issuing from a mouth adorned with a moustache, the said mouth belonging to a gentleman whom hitherto I had never seen, and who was strutting about his abode, in the morning hours, in his shirt sleeves. It was the "master of the house."

Well! I must confess, now that I have taken it into my head to make a complete confession, that although I was no novice at adventures of this kind, and although the phantoms of the husbands whom I had succeeded in embarrassing, rose at that instant in my memory, this infernal husband, for some reason or other, did not suit me; it seemed to me that he had caught me in a traitorous fashion; I could not swallow him at all.

The truth is that things had by no means passed between us as they ought always to pass according to custom. I had not selected my man. He had not been introduced to me. He was of my own age, nearly of my own height and figure. To find myself in rivalry, as had before happened, with worthy men who were over fifty, who were bald, obese, and afflicted with

gout, gravel and rheumatism, and who exercised the self-styled liberal professions as notaries, physicians and bankers, seemed in my eyes to be—all morality apart—in no wise inconvenient. But to have for my partner a young man of twenty-five, tall, slender, strapping, with a good figure, like your humble servant, wearing a fine moustache, like the same also, and in my eyes (proh pudor!), possibly beloved by his wife, this ruffled me beyond all expression. The only difference existing between us was that he was fair while I was dark. This was not sufficient to reassure me. And, my imagination assisting me, I occupied myself in coining all kinds of chimeras.

The woman whom I loved appeared to me absolutely incomprehensible. To deceive an old husband did not clash with my ideas of justice. But a young one—'twas frightful.

Nevertheless, I was not yet jealous. And if anyone had told me that I might become so, I should have fallen upon my officious adviser. A lover jealous of a husband! In what sublunary world did such a thing as that take place? Alas! had I had more experience I should have known that at Paris`

even, and throughout the universe, such was nevertheless always the case.

I do not consider it necessary to enter here upon a detailed account of the causes-most of them infinitely petty and puerile-which began to enlighten me respecting the perfectly novel sentiments which I could feel stirring within me. But I must not neglect to mention a very special sentiment of mingled wrath and humiliation which tormented me unceasingly at the thought that in nothing was I superior to the husband whose place I had usurped. In fact, neither in age, education or position could I believe myself to be other than his equal. This especially annoved me on account of his wife. I was almost angry with her for having chosen myself when so many men existed who would have esteemed themselves fortunate to be loved by her, and who would have done her more honour. Reflect that I was only twenty-four, that I was employed by Jacques Lafitte, the banker, at a salary of fifteen hundred francs. What, then, would have become of me if the husband had really been my superior? What if I had had to do with one of those men of honourable standing in society who, by their experience, their maturity of intellect, their entire life, command public esteem, and who everywhere, and on all occasions, take naturally and as of right, the first place? Certainly I should have been jealous of him, and jealous to death. The proof is that I was about to become so, only in a measure, it is true, and owing to a cause for which I had not to blush to myself. The facts are as follow:—

Some women imagine that the surest means of keeping a lover of unassured fidelity in the right path, and of retaining him, is to inspire him with jealousy. A false and absurd maxim, but one to which I was about to become a victim. With time and the assistance of a few obsessions I had finally consented to visit my neighbour's apartments. It was not without repugnance that I had decided upon doing so, for it would have revolted me to play the part of a friend towards the husband, and as long as I could, I withstood his advances, even going so far as to give him only the tips of my fingers to shake when he offered me his hand.

It was of no use; I hated him instinctively. Yet he had done me no harm. He was his wife's husband, and that was enough. It must be said further that

he was so to an excessive degree, and showed it. overmuch, as though he were afraid that people might. doubt the fact. Thus, he was not restrained by my presence from taking her hand and kissing it, from paying her compliments upon her beauty, and from making allusions, which I considered horribly out of place, to their intimate life. They had only one room and one bed, which to me was indecent and horripilant. On her side, the wife—and, heavens! how pretty she was!-who might so easily have avoided these unseasonable effusions, at least before me, affected, on the contrary, to provoke them. I supposed at that time that she had a heart vast enough to admit us both. With a calmer mind to-day—so many things have happened since then -I believe that there was on her part only lack of habituation, with, perhaps, the unconscious desire of lulling the vigilance of her Argus. The most serious part of it was, that in our private interviews she invariably defended him whenever I attacked him. And I can assure you that I made little enough scruple about doing so. Two great shocks rescued me from an intrigue which threatened to degenerate into a torture: I had the horrible grief of losing my mother; then I, in turn, was married.

Here it is of importance to confess that from the age of sixteen my sole idea had been to consecrate my life to the literary art: that with me this was an irresistible vocation and a passion; that I spent my nights in preparing myself by the severest studies for the works which I constantly shrank from elaborating only because I did not feel myself experienced enough to undertake them; that I studied myself with the completest good faith, I might say with innocence, with ingenuousness; that I observed the world and life with the stern patience of the artist who has promised to himself that he will succeed; that,-in spite of the sinister prophecy of the great De Balzac, to whom, in the presence of our common friend Gavarni, I had just confided my plans for the future, and who, laying one hand upon my shoulder and piercing my eyes with his disconcerting gaze, had said to me: "My dear fellow, humanity is infamous; you wish to see all and to say all, hence you will be a martyr,"—I did not feel myself capable of becoming enthusiastic except for truth alone; that I pursued it everywhere, in all places, in myself, in my incipient sensations, in others, observing their good qualities with as much interest as their vices; add to this that

I had an ardent imagination, a heart that was almost entirely fresh, and that opened without effort to every emotion, the noble ambition of doing well, the desire of lending lustre to my name, and you will not be surprised that although there was as yet no intention on my part of making use of them in the composition of a book, the facts which I have just narrated, related as they all were to the same social situation and the same literary notion, should have remained and become systematised in my mind.

No naturalist could tell by what series of predetermined phases an acorn falling between two clods of earth — weather, sun, and rain assisting — finally becomes an oak a hundred feet in height, twelve feet in circumference at the base, laden with foliage and branches, dazzling, superb, and suggesting to the observer the idea of a world. Similarly, it would, in spite of my goodwill, be impossible for me to explain by what series of different phenomena an idea springing up in a brain, growing larger and developing as time goes on, can ultimately become embodied in the form of a book, which book shall bring disquiet to the minds and emotion to the hearts of all who read it.

Ten years after the events which I have just related, and which I acknowledge were now pretty well forgotten, I found myself engaged in an intrigue, one of a purely intellectual and friendly kind, but one that was forthwith to give substance to my previous observations of "adultery," or rather, of "three-cornered families," if I may borrow from the repertory of society a term as expressive as it is exact.

I am now speaking of a woman "accomplished in every respect," who held in Parisian society a position as honourable as it was distinguished.

This woman—married, a mother, and beautiful enough to drive all the saints distracted—had, in remarkable contrast, the face of an angel, the figure, the walk, the manners of an angel, the gentle speech of an angel; and every one, including her own best friends, those whom she received at her house, and whose hands were clasped daily by herself and her husband, told things about her—yes, things—that would make a peony blush. By their account this charming woman, adorable in her countless perfections, whose lips, eyes, look, smile, hands, feet, shoulders, arms, surpassed in chastity, purity,

and angelic sweetness anything that Raphael had been able to paint in his pictures of the Virgin—well, by their account, this delicious woman, this unique and peerless woman, had had more than one weakness, and she had loved her lovers, not after the fashion of those days, which was somewhat reserved and almost Platonic, but with the sensual ardour which women have lost, at least in France, since the happy time of the Abbé de Brantôme.

All this was wanting in detail, and I was foolish enough not myself to seek to verify the truth or falsehood of these strange assertions. But, having become the lady's friend, and speaking much to her about ourselves, I almost unthinkingly made the completest and most charming study of living character that was ever granted an artist to make. My graceful model was endowed with such an "outward" nature, she veiled herself so little, that I deserved no credit for studying her. The most curious part of the matter was that while making her talk, impelling her to admissions, soliciting confessions which were denied me only for form's sake—and, when I think of it, what a strange, what an

extraordinary situation it was for both of us!—I used sometimes to say to her: "Do you know that you are a type, and the most enchanting of all types? What a misfortune it is that you have not in my place an artist of genius to see you and listen to you and admire you. Merely by depicting your character, he would make an imperishable masterpiece."

As she was, before all things, a woman of the world, gracious and kind, she habitually replied: "Why should you not some day be this artist? I ask nothing better than to continue to sit to you. Make your masterpiece. Above all, make it like."

I was to make it only too like.

But at that time I should have been alarmed, as at the thought of an abuse of confidence, to make use of a single one of the amorous anecdotes which she used to relate playfully to me in her soft voice, disguising real names. Her character, moreover, appeared to me so complete, so finished—to make use of an expression from the studio which is full of justness—that it was enough for me to probe it with the idea of painting it some day. I was at times in raptures over it. But how, and by what concatenation of ideas or circumstances was I ultimately

to form the intention of writing my book, and especially of blending in this book various incidents and characters which I had observed, and of introducing them into, and making them form part of, a feeble, an absolutely imaginary, adventure? The sole reason was, that these incidents harmonised with one another, that they all had relation to the same physiological and social fact, that the characters assumed an unexpected aspect in the light of the incidents, and showed to advantage in it. The artist, be it well known, has no modes of procedure except Nature—or, rather, it is Nature alone who provides him with all his modes.

Owing to the simple reason that I felt myself endowed with the qualities of an observer, the facts which I remarked around me, which I studied and which I investigated from the love of art, grouped themselves in a perfectly natural manner in my mind as though they had possessed a direct relation one to another. This intellectual operation even took place so naturally that my will had most commonly no share in it. Everything was done, so to speak, externally to myself. I have always constructed the plots of my novels in the way that M. Jourdain

talked prose, without consciousness of the fact, but perfectly convinced that "it had come!" It is to this that I attribute the tone of truth and reality which enlightened critics have often been pleased to recognise in my books. And now the reader is aware by what sequence of observations and circumstances the plot of "Fanny" was conceived.

The general plan of the work being established in my head, it was necessary to think of the characters. There are only three, as is known, and that of the chief personage, the heroine, had already been discovered. In order to comply with that most imperious law of art, the law of contrasts, I drew up that of the husband in accordance with the most vigorous principles of this law. As for the lover, I do not disown having given him the most striking characteristics which I myself possessed at his age. I acknowledge that had I found myself at four-andtwenty in his place, in the different situations of which he has experience, I should have behaved as he does. Some of my friends, the oldest and most intimate among them, have often told me that they had recognised in the language of the personage in question the forms of phrases which have always

"You have halved yourself, in order to portray yourself in the parts of lover and husband," my old fellow student, Alexandre Dumas the younger, wrote to me a few days after the publication of my book. With all due deference to him, the truth is that I had put very little of myself into the character of the husband.

The book, however, was being elaborated quite of itself within me-indeed, almost apart from mewhile I applied myself to my ordinary occupations. But I could not make up my mind to write the first line of it. I did not feel that the germ was ripe enough. The time had not yet come. All revolved in my head about two ideas, as about two poles: the lover jealous of the husband, and the secret torture of adultery. For a long time I remained—if I may be allowed the comparison—like a woman who is in the seventh month of her pregnancy, and who waits from day to for the moment of her delivery, asking herself whether this moment will be still longer delayed. and fretting at her inability to do anything that will accelerate it. As I wished to write under the

pressure of direct emotion, of passion genuinely felt I came, by dint of stimulating my imagination, to believe that the adventure living within me was a real one, and that I was really in love, jealous, and unhappy. And I am able to assert that I was; but I still abstained from writing.

At last, one day in the month of January, 1858, as I was entering the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin on my way to the Bourse—it would be superfluous to ask whether I was thinking of my novel—a half-frozen shower happened to fall, and, not liking to get wet, I took shelter in the entrance to the Hôtel du Cardinal, Fesch. There, in the midst of twenty persons, who had all sought shelter in the entry, I felt within me something that reproached my indolence. The moment had come. I might have gone home in order to set to work. I preferred to take immediate advantage of the inclination—I was going to say the inspiration—which I felt.

So there I stood, and, drawing a pencil and a Stock Exchange note-book out of my pocket, began, altogether heedless of the persons who surrounded me, to write the first chapter.

"The house is set obliquely on a sandy knoll on the

edge of the strand, looking aside at the Ocean as though distrustful of him."

I wrote the entire chapter thus in the gateway, and I experienced an indescribable emotion. An emotion so sweet and so strong! I was perfectly cognisant of the value that it had for me, and now that I was at last in possession of it I would not let it slip. As the rain still continued, I entered a cab and drove to the Bourse. There, instead of busying myself with matters which on such a day had little interest for me, I took refuge in the office for stockbrokers' clerks, and wrote the second chapter with the same pencil and in the same pocket-book.

"If I have voluntarily exiled myself in this frightful solitude it is because it has been, and still is, my misfortune to love."

And indeed I was then in love, in love with all the forces of my soul, I can assert it upon my honour. But with whom? With an ideal, a supreme ideal, composed of all the graces and all the seductions of womanhood, and simultaneously of all the torments and all the joys with which a woman is capable of overpowering us. Never had I been in a like condition There was an element of religion in the collectedness

with which I listened to the inward voice that was dictating my book to me. Nevertheless I was aware that in Paris I should be disturbed too often to be able peacefully to achieve and bring to a happy termination a work which demanded all my attention, care and solicitude.

That same evening I took flight to a small estate at Aunay, which I had bought from my father-in-law, M. Blanqui. There, all to myself—for I was quite alone, having only a gardener to wait on me—I rose before daybreak, and, crouching over the fire, wrote on a little table, taking barely two hours out of the twenty-four for my walks and meals. I had so identified myself with my subject, I felt my types to be so alive, and my work progressed so quickly, that I anticipated finishing it in the country. Alas! I became disheartened when two thirds of my task were accomplished, and on returning to Paris I was sensible of such fatigue that I was on the point of throwing the whole thing aside.

My first visit was to my friend Gustave Flaubert.

"What are you doing just now?" he enquired of me with interest.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I am writing a novel."

- "Pooh!"
- "Yes, I am."
- "Well, tell me your novel."

I related the whole of it to him—that is to say, exclusively as far as the balcony scene, which was the point at which I had stopped.

Flaubert, who is good-nature itself, and who has always given me proofs of the sincerest friendship, praised me highly, encouraged me like a kindly fellow-worker, and then said, suddenly:—

- "However, it won't do to finish like that. Tell me what follows."
  - "But it is there that I have stopped."
- "What matter! Tell me how you intend to conclude."
- "In order," I replied, "on the one hand to obey the law of progressions, without respect to which no novel is possible, and on the other, to yield to the logic of things, of events and characters, I see myself obliged to terminate the book with a certain scene, and it seems to me, even before I have written it, to be so bold a one that, although I judge it indispensable to the conclusion of the book, which, without it, would not exist, I dare not write it. It frightens me,"

"Tell me the scene," said Flaubert.

Forthwith I improvised the balcony scene; then I continued, and brought the narrative to its close.

"Fool that you are!" returned Flaubert, "this scene is the success of the book. And you hesitate? You are not worthy to hold a pen. I renounce you for my friend."

But in truth I hesitated no longer, the proof being that on the following morning, after two hours' work, I had written the words "The end," at the foot of the last page of the manuscript.

I had taken fourteen years to meditate it; eleven days had sufficed me for the writing of it.

But before considering about getting it printed, I deemed it well to comply with what I regarded as an obligation of conscience. I went to see the thousand times too kind and charming woman, who had authorised me to adapt her seductive person and amiable disposition to the incidents with which I have generously gratified the heroine of my novel.

"I come," I said to her, "to ask of you a fresh service. It is to be so kind as to listen to the reading of your supposititious adventure."

This was uncompromising, but she did not even

frown. A further trait in her character. I read clearly. I was, nevertheless, terribly moved. As for her, she literally hung on my lips; she did not lose a word of what I read. It interested her immensely. She uttered cries of pleasure. At times she would interrupt me and say, "That is not accurate. This expression is too forced. In similar circumstances I should not have acted so, I should not have said that."

And I modified the manuscript.

"I almost wish," I said on leaving her, "to put your name beside my own on the cover of the volume."

"How foolish you are for a sensible man!" she replied.

We have never again spoken about it since.

And now that my confession is finished, I cannot conceal from myself the fact that in writing it I have just done perhaps a dangerous, but certainly an oddly audacious thing. No writer, to my knowledge, has ever gone so far in his frankness, as to confide to the public—who did not ask for them—the secrets of his comedy. Who knows whether the good faith with which I have disguised nothing in my

narrative, shall not be turned against me and cause me annoyances without number! We are always punished for acting rightly. Our troubles, our sorrows, our torments, our mischances always proceed only from our best feelings. Hard, dry souls are the only ones to escape suffering in this world. Straightforwardness has to be paid for, good-faith is costly, sincerity is a ruin. It seems to me just now that I can hear a chorus of pretty readers blaming me, rallying me, imprecating me.

"What!" they say to me, "you have been guilty of this clumsiness? Without being forced to it, without any of us asking you to do so, here you come suddenly, after twelve years' silence, without a word of warning, and light-heartedly rob us of our illusions. And so you have robbed us of the tears which your book made us shed, of the gentle emotions which we experienced as we read it? So they were not your due? How, after interesting us so powerfully in the narrative of a love-story, the greatest merit of which, in our eyes, proceeds from the quality of reality in which it is, as it were, steeped, can you come and tell us quietly that it was nothing but a fiction? But people are not

allowed to behave in that manner, Mr. Author; well-bred people don't do that kind of thing, and you are committing something worse than suicide."

Fair ladies, allow me. In writing my book I did nothing but what had been done with far better authority before me by those of my predecessors who had had the happiness of making your mothers and grandmothers weep. If it is absolutely necessary for a "love-story" to have happened to its narrator in order to interest and please you, why are you pleased and interested when reading "Othello," "Romeo and Juliet," "The New Heloïse," "Paul and Virginia," "Manon Lescaut"? Moreover, on this principle, not a shadow of literary art would be left, or, rather, all literary art would be reduced to the level of the "miscellaneous items" which are to be found on the third page of the newspapers. We must not push our materialism so far. The important element in a book does not consist of the incidents, but of the juice, the soul of it, the breath of passion which animates it. Now, know this: If a man had the genius of the divine Shakespeare, and desired to do so, he could not, without having first experienced it, express in all its sincerity a passion so keen, so truthful, so young, so truly human, as that which, as you condescend to tell me, moves throughout "Fanny," from the first line to the last.

Let us understand one another in good faith; the adventure about which we are now commencing actually happened. Yes, it has happened more than a hundred thousand times—once, perhaps, to yourself, madame, who are reading me, and that is the reason why you understand so well. And it especially happened to me, but it happened at the time when I was writing in my study, and nowhere else.

Whatever the cause of it may be, the moment that passion penetrates a man's heart, and that he expresses it well or ill, by word of mouth or with the pen, this passion exists in the highest degree. It is touching and worthy of interest. Be advised, therefore, my dear sisters, and cease to show me the politeness of regretting that I was not a witness of a scene which might have flattered my curiosity, but which, had I been situated like the lover in "Fanny," would certainly have caused me much pain.

I have felt only too keenly the terrible throbs of jealous hearts, and I am acquainted only too well with the poignant, unspeakable pangs of love when it is at conflict with itself. And, good heavens! who among us has been able to live for twenty years in the adorable Inferno of Parisian society without having had his heart crushed at least once by one of the sirens who constitute its charm and its grace? Name him to us, all of you, my sisters, whose allurements have drawn us thither, and keep us there.

But, above all, forgive me the confession which I have just made, and, as I take leave of you, allow me, while thanking you for the attention which you have been kind enough to afford me, to make one further observation to you respecting "Fanny." It shall be the last. What would you say of a man who, after having had the honour of being distinguished by one of you, would go and—I do not say cry the secret of his happiness from the house-tops—but tell it to the public? Who would not blush to detail in the eyes of this mocking and listless public your refinements, your beauties, the perfections of your persons and the qualities of your souls.

Some men of letters, you have been told, have done so. The thing is very possible. There is a great deal of vanity in some of my fellow-writers. As faras I am concerned, I have always regarded an action of the kind as a meanness, or rather—to use the proper word—a sacrilege, and had I the misfortune to have such a one on my conscience, I should condemn myself to write no more in order to expiate my crime.

Paris, June, 1870.



#### CHAPTER I.

THE house is set obliquely on a sandy knoll on the edge of the strand, looking aside at the Ocean as though distrustful of him. It is a low house with a flat roof, the latter covering a ground-floor pierced by a high door and six windows, and having a cracked plaster chimney quite at the top.

When I saw it for the first time and at a distance, as I was crossing the solitary dunes, it had so mournful an appearance that I felt a heaviness of heart. Neglect was inscribed in gaping crevices on its roughened wall, in deep

chinks on the ravaged tiles of the roof; its closed door, shaking on a single hinge, creaked at each pressure from the wind, while the fog, then rising from the liquid mountains of the ocean, wrapped it in a shroud.

It was cold. A keen and whistling north wind shook the crests of the waves, made them dance and whirl, and rent them into shreds. Hillocks of sand, strewn with rubbish and planted with pale nettles and thistles, flowed back to the warped threshold. Behind, the grass, encroaching upon the site of a garden, stretched like a dark, green patch. A miserable tree shrinking against the wall on the land side could with difficulty keep back its boughs, which were tormented furiously by the hurricane. It had lost all its foliage, with the bare exception of a few scanty sprays towards its foot. It drew itself up piteously between the gusts, and the leaden spout, torn from its hooks and hanging by one end above it, beat it and tore it in the cruel swaying to and fro to which it was ceaselessly compelled by the wind.

I, wishing to exile myself from the world,

recalled this tumble-down farmhouse which had been bequeathed to me by my father, and which formed part of a domain now sold. I came to it in quest of silence and solitude. But I did not repair the threshold, nor did I cultivate the garden. I left the chinks on the roof through which the rain filtered into the low room; I left the crevices in the wall wherein was absorbed the harsh hurricane of the autumnal nights; I did not refasten the hinge of the door; I did not lift with my hands the leaden spout; I took no pity on the old tree, which writhed like one crucified against the wall, because Fate had taken no pity upon me.

But I made my abode in the only room, without effecting any change in its sordid furniture. A wooden bench was my seat; a heap of wrack was my bed. Never did I make a bright fire blaze in the brick fire-place. I fed on the hard, black bread which sailors eat, and I drank rain-water drawn from the cistern behind the house.

And from the day on which I took up my

abode until the day on which I am writing this, I did not leave the mournful house. Lying on the hard, salt leaves, or seated on the narrow bench with bent knees, hanging arms, clasped hands, and sunken head, I suffered the days to elapse with indifference. Like those great oxen which in my childhood I used to see kneeling in the deserted pasture, I chewed the bitter cud of my recollections.

Sometimes, however, I crossed the tottering threshold with the heavy step of a man who has not slept off his intoxication, and wandered slowly round my accursed dwelling. I looked gravely upon it in the cold, pale light of a November dawn as upon a neglected tomb rotting beneath the grass, and I was ever astonished to see it upright and piteous, notwithstanding the wind-gusts which beat upon it.

But I never left it. And what was there outside that could attract me? On one side the ocean spread his raging billows with a despairing and monotonous roar; on the other the green-

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spotted sand extended further than the eye could reach; above rolled the heavy, silent clouds. No other house but mine showed its mournful outline against the dull sky, and the headland of brown rocks in front of me ceaselessly thrust out its long, threatening arm into the bosom of the sea.

### CHAPTER II.

IF I have voluntarily exiled myself in this frightful solitude, it is because it has been, and still is, my misfortune to love. But think not that some terrible occurrence separated me from my mistress. Would to God it had been thus! I should still be able to bless her!

For a long time I had loved her without daring to tell her so. So many things separated us that I shrank from contending against them. Moreover, I was only twenty-four. I blushed when our eyes met; I was abstracted, moved, trembling, when in her presence. At last she understood that I loved her, and, like one rising to push aside a barrier, she quietly, and with her own fair hand, removed every obstacle.

Oh, it was, above all, for this that I worshipped her! And then she was so tender and so beautiful! At thirty-five she had preserved all the freshness and sprightliness of early youth, and to these charms she added that indefinable repose which women derive from experience.

She was tall, slender, with very slight shoulders, a delicate figure and modest lips, and the confidence of her gait had a firmness in it that revealed an active soul in an agile body. When she stood, she usually suffered her bare, queenly arms to hang down, bringing them together in order to cross her hands before her; then the great folds of her garnet velvet dress fell straight to her little arched feet and rested behind on the ground, while, walking with measured steps, she carried her pure and radiant head slightly advanced on her gently curving, swan-like neck.

When seated, she was fond of resting her cheek upon her right hand, while she, at the same time, stretched out her left arm over the glossy satin of her chair, brushing it with her slender fingers as with fingers of ivory. Her

fair, ashen hair, smooth and light on the crown of her head, played in curly locks on her temples, on her dull-tinted cheeks and all about her neck; her straight, sweetly formed nose, her exquisite nostrils, her low, flat forehead, her undimpled chin, were in harmony with her arched eyebrows and her refined and well-matched lips; lastly, her soft, dark blue eyes, with their wide, black pupils, and tender shroud of prominent eyelids, fringed with tufted lashes, had an expression of tenderness, innocence, surprise and purity, which provoked and ravished me.

At the very first I loved her to distraction, and I have the same love for her still. As for her, she loved me as she knew how to love: with inner reservation, with limits. Her air, pleasing and natural as it was, awed me. Even while she clasped me to suffocation in her arms, I could feel that she was still holding me at a distance. It is thus that queens and empresses must love their lovers. This is in the first place the reason why I began to suffer and why you see me here.

As I would fain have spent every moment of my life beside her, I sought every opportunity of meeting her. I could not content myself with the two hours which she granted me every weekshe had so many things to look after!—and I used to pursue her imprudently everywhere, often remaining for whole hours with my face to the wind and my feet in the snow, in order to see her pass at some turning in the Bois, gracefully cowled in rose-coloured silk behind the window of her rapid brougham. Every evening with inexpressible heaviness of heart I used to go and wander in the fog beneath her blazing windows, or, wrapped in my cloak and mingling with the attendants would watch to see her coming out beneath the peristyle of the Théâtre des Italiens; or again, with my shoulder leaning against a . doorpost, I would wait long in order to see her going into a hall, with flowers twined in her hair and her shoulders bare to the breasts, and I would then look to see whether her white satin bodice swelled and strained to the pressure of her bosom when she had perceived me; and, as I bowed

respectfully to her, I found it very hard to refrain from falling at her feet.

There, in the heavy atmosphere saturated with with acrid scents, beneath the dazzling rays darting arrow-like from the heart of the chandeliers, I watched her moving in her grace. I followed her with my eyes as, with a curved wrist on the arm of an old man bedecked with orders, who called her affectionately by her Christian name, she went round among the groups with an air and step that distinguished her from all women. I gazed long upon her while, half-lying against the back of a broad seat, she politely, but without coldness, received the homages of earnest youths, or while, hanging with motionless bust and head, and with arm extended on the shoulder of some indefatigable waltzer, she whirled round in billows of gauze and laces to the rhythmic harmonies of flute and violin. Then her eyes gleamed like bright stars beneath the fretted flowers among her curls; her teeth shone like pearls between her parted lips; her moist cheeks and white shoulders grew rosy

as at the contact of my lips, while each time that she glided round, the tip of her little foot showed beyond the edge of her dress which was caught backwards by the swiftness of the motion. neither the seductiveness of homage, nor the excitement of the waltz, nor even my presence succeeded in moving her. She accepted everything with a look of happiness, but with an even tranguillity of countenance which seemed more than the appeal in her gaze to disquiet and leave colourless the men whose eyes encountered her own. Yet I never caught on her part any of those captivating and half-mocking modes of conduct which are the false expression of the strife between an affected heart and an undecided intellect, which cloak and season advances, which anger hope without discouraging it. But why was it that the presence of her lover never disturbed her? It was in vain that I gazed my eves out in looking at her; she did not seem to perceive me.

She was a woman to her finger-tips.

#### CHAPTER III.

THE wished-for morning dawned at last! Up at daybreak, I took a childish pleasure in personally adorning my apartment. I decorated it with fresh flowers; I drew the pink, large-flowered, brocade curtains, so as to sift and softly tint the brilliance of too strong a light; I skilfully arranged the muslin hangings, and with my own hands smoothed the cappadine counterpane on my bed; and with a sigh I myself set the unheeding clock, the pendulum of which never went fast enough then.

On a small table of West India wood I placed candied fruits and fancy biscuits in china saucers, surrounded by Bohemian glasses and a flask or two of Marsala. I had dismissed my

valet until the evening, and I at last found myself absolute master of my dainty nook: I would be free within it, like a bird beneath the foliage of solitary woods, rounding and pressing with its restless breast the nest of its loves. To what pains did I not go in order to anticipate the slightest wishes of the woman I worshipped! With my own hands I stuck the pins into the velvet pin-cushion; from her red morocco jewelbox I drew the comb with tortoise-shell teeth which she employed for smoothing the locks disarranged by the pressure of my trembling hands; I stirred the languishing fire that blushed as it buried itself in ashes; I drew her easy chair to the hearth: I looked on the divan for the thick cushion on which I used to kneel at her feet. in the attitude of a devotee contemplating his idol.

And when everything was thus arranged, and the golden hand as it approached the chosen figure, seemed to say to me: "You will soon hear the hour of your pleasure strike," I was more restless and more moved than ever, going con-

stantly on tip-toe from the window to the door, just as a faithful dog, tortured by impatience, runs to and fro as he discerns his master's step.

And I said to myself:

"Now she too is casting stealthy glances at the clock. She knows that I am waiting for her. Now she is standing in front of her mirror, and fastening the string of her velvet cloak beneath her chin: she is curling the rebel locks on her pure brow; she is wrapping the dark shawl about her shoulders, and fastening it at her breast with the cameo brooch; she is putting on her gloves, and is growing impatient; and now she is heaping the folds of her black veil over her blue eyes; she is crossing her empty rooms; she passes on; she presses the bolt of the lock; she goes out; she descends; she glides past the walls. I shall see her!"

And then there was nothing further!

Oh! time is long when you are waiting and are in despair! What if some obstacle were to supervene!—a visit, a child's whim! Unhappy

fellow that I am! She will not come! She is late!

And yet it had been so sweet to receive her here, once more, in this room so well prepared for her! So sweet to take her in my arms on the very threshold, and bear her away into hiding like a treasure! So pleasant to touch her hands and hair; to see her at last raise her beautiful eyes freely towards me; to hear her say thou to me in her silken voice.

#### CHAPTER IV.

SHE was coming at last! Crouching against the leaf of the half-opened door, I hearkened to the rustlings of her dress and the sound of her boots as they creaked on the staircase carpet. She was coming in, her cheeks purpled with cold, out of breath, with tears on her eyelashes; and, without raising her veil, without uttering a word, she was throwing herself prone upon my breast, fastening her arms about my neck, and, timorous and startled as a bird, listening tremulously, with eagerness of ear and feature, to the slightest noise in the house or street.

And when she had at last stilled her terrors and ventured to leave the threshold, it was like a dazzling vision shedding floods of light in the

confined apartment. By her mere presence she lent an unheard-of worth to the most insignificant objects. It seemed to me as though everything then took life, as the woods, sleeping in shadow and silence, awake in the first days of spring.

Sometimes, however, bright ravs of sunshine passed through the opening between the curtains. traversed the intervening space, and were shattered at the back of the alcove on the clear surface of a mirror. The flowers in the baskets placed in front of the windows were shedding their leaves one by one and strewing the carpet with their fresh petals. Speaking in whispers, with incoherent words, of ourselves alone, and holding each other's hands, we at first gazed passionately at each other, absorbed in delicious, deep emotion, which gave gentle pain to our hearts, and brought tears to our eyes. Our outpourings were infinite as our love, our beatitude was infinite; but our thoughts went no further than the discreet walls of the silent room. The whole world was for us contained within them.

And how we devoured each other with caresses! What sweet energy in our embraces! What greed in our kisses! What feverish quivering in our gestures while I silently disputed with her for the possession of the disordered garments, which, pale with vague terror, she held clutched upon her! In desperation I threw myself upon my knees before her. I entwined her yielding figure in my arms, and she, curving in my embrace, laid the palms of her hands upon my forehead, gently held me back and turned away her head as though she were afraid of my eyes.

And, as though to annihilate myself before her, I fell prostrate and gave long kisses to her naked feet. I would fain have died there, with my lips pressed upon the childish, pink and white feet, which she buried in the swansdown rug, while she quivered beneath her coverings like the angel of unrest half shadowed in the plumage of her wings.

#### CHAPTER V.

The first moment of tumult past, it seemed as if it were nothing to her to find herself again in my home, and submitting to the wild eagerness of my embrace. Then, more mute, more serious, more absorbed than myself, she appeared in all her splendid disorder—with loosened hair, uncovered shoulders, bare arms, and calm and dainty lip—to be as much at her ease as though she were seated in her great velvet chair by her own drawing-room fireside. I do not know what she would not have done with the most natural and dignified air. Nothing took her by surprise; nothing shocked her.

#### CHAPTER VI.

On every occasion we had a world of fresh thoughts to exchange. We told each other of the weariness of waiting, the enervation of anxiety, the mournfulness of absence, the aspirations of hope, and, further, of the consolation which severed lovers find in thinking ceaselessly of each other. Fanny in particular gave herself up to this spiritual union, with all the expansiveness of a vouthful soul. My tender confidences reached her like a vapour of incense, burying her in a sort of sweet torpor. With mute bursts of gratitude, with rosy cheek, and quivering nostrils, and smiling, swimming eyes, she marvelled at the abundance of my words, as also at the graceful images which took flight from my lips. She could not weary of listening to me.

"Again! speak again! my Roger!" she would say.

And, with her elbow sunk in the pillow, her temple resting on her hand, her body bent, her feet hanging down, she would caress my brow and hair, gazing at me with all her eyes as though to distinguish the subtlest lineaments of my thought, while I, on my knee and with clasped hands, would smile with pleasure, like an encouraged child, and it would seem to me then, that it was our two souls which were united in a vague, sweet embrace, with voluptuous thrillings.

#### CHAPTER VII.

But it was especially at the time when she was preparing to leave that my love and sorrow burst forth. Pensively, and with emotion, she used to rest her blue, limpid eyes upon mine. She would affectionately take both my hands, which I, turning away in vexation, would endeavour to withdraw. Then she lectured me prettily, like a mother; stroked my cheeks kindly, kissed me, went away, returned and kissed me once more.

"I shall never see you again!" I would cry, in sadness.

"Be quiet, Roger," she used to say, stifling my voice in a kiss.

Finally, I would strain her for a last time long to my heart, and very often while thus embracing each other, we could feel the hot tears flowing upon our lips.

## CHAPTER VIII.

SHE went away nevertheless and my life with her. Leaning with melancholy upon the ledge of my window I used to watch her through the spaces in the Venetian blind as she passed along the street. She walked slowly, simple, tranquil, beautiful. The ends of her veil fluttered gently over her shoulders, caressing her face on each side. The edge of her dress, with its puffings of silk, rustled upon her track. Both her hands, advanced in front of her waist, clasped the folds of the dark cashmere which shrouded her from neck to ankle.

She did not turn round. She kept close to the walls in order to avoid the jostling of the passers-by. At last she turned the corner of the street. She disappeared; and I forthwith threw myself upon my bed and hid my face in my hands, calling in distraction upon all my scattered memories, that I might seek once more to possess her.

#### CHAPTER IX.

THE first time she came she was not astonished, but she observed all her surroundings, and touched everything with a certain reserve. There were two broad swords crossed over a panel; I remember that she looked at them. So, too, she paused for a long time before the portrait of my mother, who had been very beautiful, as also in front of my desk, with its load of letters and books. But with a discretion that was full of grace she passed on smiling, without touching the letters.

#### CHAPTER X.

I was happy! How I despised them, all others than myself, because she did not love them! I looked upon the world from a distant height; unfettered, I soared above it all with indifference, but full of pride. It seemed to me that all the perfumes of earth and all the smiles of heaven were centring upon me; the glances which met mine appeared to gleam with flashes of envy, and the confused murmur of heaving crowds resounded in my ear like distant acclamations. Fanny's image burdened my memory, and stood out amid all my thoughts. She was at once more irritating than a dream, and more comforting than hope. Never had I suspected the possibility of so many seductive qualities in a human being, so much choiceness in a heart, so much gracefulness in reserve, so much modesty in surrender.

A mingling of enthusiasm and musing, of illusions and discouragement, of melancholy and childishness, had been sufficient to enable me to win her love. Nevertheless, she appeared to me to be somewhat deadened to attentions and services. She had doubtless received so much love! Still beautiful, more beautiful than she perhaps believed, she increased each one of her graces by the timid effort which she put forth to avoid the apathy which distantly she could feel coming with the years. Especially there were days when her gaze consented to more of humanity in its penetration, when her lips met with a more affectionate expression of meditation, when her hair, flowing in soft ringlets upon her smoothly chiselled temples, surrounded them with a sort of sweet pity. Then I looked at her hands, plump and so white, and thought that they had as it were doubled themselves that their last caresses might be more ample, more maternal. I listened

with anxiety to the sighs uttered from her struggling bosom. To me they seemed the muffled protestation of a heart which was still offering resistance to indifference, while, perhaps, wishing to find rest in it, and which was sending forth its fairest flame before shrinking in upon itself and ceasing to beat.

# CHAPTER XI.

I was happy! But I was soon going to be no longer so. Up to that time Fanny had, with the most touching delicacy, avoided making the slightest allusion to her husband in my presence. With a little goodwill I might have imagined to myself that she was free, and was not shared by another. She had given herself in so chaste a manner!—like a queen, without haggling in the least over what could not be sold. But one day,—I do not know how it came about,—the name of one of her children sounded softly upon her lips, and from that time she could not refrain from speaking to me about them.

She adored them with a love so extravagant that I believe she would have left me had I not

taken pleasure in hearing her relate to me a thousand trivial things concerning them. For my part, I always feigned the greatest interest in those narratives, which she uttered with extraordinary exuberance of heart; but I listened far more to the music of her words than to the meaning which belonged to them. I worshipped her sweet, melodious voice. And then I was a little jealous of anything that she loved.

She used to speak to me, therefore, about her children. The youngest having been attacked by a passing epidemic, I thought that I was going to take an aversion to these poor little creatures who had committed no offence save that of crouching shiveringly with myself into the love-nest of the same heart. She then did a thing which forced me to reflect very bitterly upon the total amount of affection which a mother is able to give to a man. She remained for six weeks without seeing me. She did not stir a foot from the cradle in which the sweet living treasure, formed of her own heart's blood, lay struggling.

She scarcely did so much as write me four lines, calling upon me to suffer and to grieve with her.

FANNY.

"Proud man, who pretend to reign alone over a woman's heart," I said to myself, "see what a lesson is given you by nature at the pettiest complaints of a child."

Reflecting about this child, I surprised myself thinking about the husband. And soon, in spite of myself, I ceased to think about anyone else. I had never seen him. What motive had I previously had to look at the man who gave her his arm to lead her into a ball-room, and who, as soon as a circle of admirers had been formed around her, discreetly lost himself in the crowd so as to isolate her from himself? I loved, I saw none but her. I lived for her alone. What was her husband to me?

However, the first day when, after the cure of her child, she came back to me, more affectionate and more beautiful than before, she did not perceive in me a new man; but she discerned that some secret thought claimed my attention while I passed my hand in silence over her bare arm. Then, catching suddenly at the most cruel suspicion, she repulsed me, rose, and declared loudly that I had betrayed her.

I smiled softly at this foolish accusation, and, taking her hand as an invitation to reseat herself, told her simply that I was hesitating about asking a fresh favour from her through dread of showing myself indiscreet.

"Well, what is it?" she said, still keeping me at a distance, and raising her eyes towards me with a look of surprise.

I replied that the past six weeks of solitude had caused me to reflect mournfully upon our lack of foresight. Not so much as suspecting that any incident could separate us, we had contrived no opportunity of coming together. At last, with an embarrassment which I could not control, I stammered:

"Why am I not admitted into your house?"

She did not surmise that I was disguising my thought by speaking in this way, for she imme-

diately beamed with smiles, and throwing both her arms effusively round my neck, she confessed to me with blushes that from the very first day she had wished unceasingly to see me at her house.

"Then why did you not speak of it?" I said, as I caressed her.

She replied by making the saucy little pout of those who invite discernment, and suddenly delightful plans for a common existence began to spring in torrents from her lips: "I should see her children! I should love them!" She looked forward with pleasure to prepare for my reception with greater elegance than ever the private drawing-room in which only her friends were received. What happiness to be able nearly every day to assemble around her all the objects of her liveliest affection. Her thought would henceforward be no longer obliged to leave her present children to seek for my image through space, to bring it back to their midst, and cause it to shine in the delicious retreat adorned by herself alone in accordance with her own taste. Finally, I should henceforth occupy a larger place—not in her heart, for that would be impossible — but in her life, and I should immediately take my share in all her joys as well as in all her sorrows. It was a charming dream.

## CHAPTER XII.

WE agreed that I should at length accept the invitations of one of her friends who gave a dinner-party every week.

"There are never many people," she said.
"You will easily be able to become friendly with us."

Us!—For the first time she in a single word innocently associated her husband with herself, without suspecting the anguish which this association caused me. Dear Fanny! I was sensible of a vague oppressiveness causing me to turn pale while she was blushing with happiness. She rose as she uttered this word

—one that was terrible to me, but unimportant to her. The two hours were spent; we separated. As she departed, she carried away as much confidence with herself as she left behind horrible hope to me.

## CHAPTER XIII.

YES, horrible hope! for it is beyond my power to express the uncertainties, the longings, the bitter feelings that stirred within me at the thought that I was at last going to see her beneath the eyes of him who ruled her life. All these sensations were mingled within my heart like poisons and antidotes, and from the abominable medley there issued vapours so pungent that I could feel my brain reeling in my head, and my knees bending under me.

But this was nothing to what I was to experience at that too narrow table, where, beneath the sheets of light shed from the globes of the lamps, no guest could conceal from anyone the thoughts that wrinkled his brow. At first I saw nothing,

and gave random replies to the questions addressed to me. I ate mechanically and with constraint, striving to be attentive and polite, but more haggard than an assassin who feels that he is on the point of being discovered. Bewildered by the clinking of glasses, the clashing of silver, the ringing of porcelain; dazzled by the reflection of the touches of light on the covers of the dishes; confused by the going and coming of the assiduous servants as they served everyone without uttering a word, gliding noiselessly over the carpets like dark, white-gloved shadows, suffocated by the hot atmosphere of the room, impregnated with penetrating flavours mingled with the odour of wines and the scent of flowers, I did not look at Fanny, I did not even listen to her voice. Her presence at my side had become insupportable to me; it was like a weight stifling me. And neither did I look at HIM whom I had come so far to seek with the terrified desire of knowing him. Blinded by funereal visions I could not see him. though he was seated in front of me.

Suddenly I regained clearness of thought as I felt a woman's foot gliding upon my own and pressing it with gentle force. It was she who was warning me of my too obvious abstraction. I glanced at her to thank her, and then, leaning back in my chair, bestowed a lengthened look upon the man who had no suspicion of the powerful interest to which the study of his person was about to give rise within me.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

HE was a sort of bull with a human face. Of medium height, he protruded his lusty shoulders as he ate, and his chair creaked beneath the heavy flexion of his sturdy back. From where I sat I could see on his forehead the stern, upright arches of eyebrows bristling with coarse hairs, and his clear, grey eye shone beneath with the metallic lustre which gleams in the impassive pupil of one much addicted to the consumption of meat.

He ate, bringing his short, hairy hands close together in front of him, and raising his elbows the better-to lean upon his glittering knife and the handle of his fork. After each plateful he

took a deep breath, wiped his mouth, and drank long draughts of undiluted wine.

He looked neither ill-natured nor vulgar; he looked strong. His whole person revealed extraordinary muscular power. The surface of his cheeks and of his well-shaven chin presented the rigidity of marble, and his clear, open forehead, surrounded by dark hair that was already growing grey, disclosed a mind possessed of a will full of straightforwardness and persistence.

His smile was kind; his look without malevolence, but clear as crystal. He looked you in the face, in the eyes, and in such a manner that you esteemed yourself fortunate if you avoided this steel mirror which was annoying from its very openness. He perhaps laughed rather boisterously, jerking his pectoral muscles above his well-contracted waist, and throwing back his purple face. His voice was deep and sonorous; his gestures quiet, and almost heavy. He had fine teeth, and pink, shining, well-trimmed nails; in short, an air of uprightness and frankness was diffused over his entire person.

He appeared to me to be forty years of age.

All at once I was as though prostrated; I was ashamed to find myself in rivalry with so powerful a nature. Involuntarily I compared myself with him, and found myself puny beside him, as nearly all young fellows of my age would have been. How small seemed my consciousness of bodily weakness, of refinement of breeding and elegance, in presence of this richness of blood, this amplitude of form, this cold, calm virility. I seemed to myself like a sylph gazing in consternation at the statue of a giant. What manner of man was I beside him? He only, and not I, was the strong and comely expression of a man!

And with still greater cruelty towards myself, I continued my comparison from myself to her. And, seeing her seated by my side, gentle and fair as Eve, pure as a maiden, with her slender waist, her neck slightly advanced, her look of wonder shed like the shadow of vapour over her charming face—knowing her to be so refined in thought, I asked myself distractedly how she had formerly found it possible to love him! 'Twas a

violent association of two natures that had not a single point in common. They were mated like silk and steel!

"Oh! Desdemona!" I said to myself, "what an Othello hast thou chosen!"

But she had not the faintest suspicion of the frenzy that was brooding just beside her. She spoke tranquilly to me, looking into my eyes with an air of simplicity, and with her white hand putting aside the fair locks which fluttered like feathers upon her brow. And she spoke to him before me without disquiet or constraint; she called him "dear" in my presence.

And he replied to her with even less of constraint, with much consideration and deference, but with a very evident air of superiority. This Hercules saw in her a charming but absurd creature; accordingly, he uttered only trifles to her, in an amiable and paternal fashion, just as fathers do to inquisitive little children.

## CHAPTER XV.

When dinner was over and the guests had gone to seat themselves round whist tables in the great drawing-room, I went slowly up to Fanny, who was warming her feet in front of the fire. Leaning against the edge of the mantle-piece, I mingled commonplace remarks uttered in a loud tone with words of tenderness addressed to her in a whisper. From where I stood I could see the backs of the players bent towards the tables, where the candles, set in heavy, silver candlesticks, shone softly beneath their shades; I could hear the sound of the mother-of-pearl counters and the murmur of the ambiguous words exchanged between the partners. I expected that with a little skilfulness we should be able to talk thus quite comfortably about ourselves, the mistress of the house being seated at the end of the room in front of the

piano, the keys of which she was skimming with the tips of her fingers. And a fresh charm, added to all the rest, was that of the drowsy chords trembling in the air at the same time that love's secret melodies, more melodious still, were singing within us. But my rival, suddenly quitting the group of players behind which he had hitherto been standing, advanced affably towards us, and, in the most natural way in the world, asked us what we were talking about.

With an exquisite politeness that excluded any form of familiarity, and that kept us, as he understood it, at a distance from each other, but with tranquility of tone and courtesy of manner, he immediately began to lead the conversation, and I could not help following him. Through the soft bursts of music, to the tenderness of the muffled vibrations of which he paid little heed, he spoke to me of hunting and the theatre and horses, and heaven knows what besides, not even condescending to go to the root of the trifling subjects which I had impru-

dently chosen, but which he now condemned me to pursue as though they had been the only ones which he judged worthy of me. I made him two or three rather ingenious answers, and he commended me with a glance, honouring me with a half bow. Thus I was to him a sufficiently frivolous instrument, with the chords of which he dallied with his finger-tips for his own amusement. And, heavens! if he had known that in my heart there was one of those chords the terrible resonance of which was capable of bursting forth in his ears and deafening him!

Later on I saw him seated beside her in the shadow that floated about the light from the candles. Without noticing myself or anyone else, and without looking at her, he was pressing her hand with his own in an almost mechanical fashion, dreaming, perhaps, of I know not what. And I looked on as at the strangest and most monstrous of spectacles. As for her, her eyes were fixed on mine, and she was white as an ivory statue; but she dared not stir, she dared not speak, and she yielded.

## CHAPTER XVI.

From that time I was possessed by only one thought, that of effacing absolutely from my mind the image of what I had just seen. I wished, at all costs, to forget what humiliated me and rent my heart. How greatly did I regret what I had done! How absurd had been my desire to learn what she had so well concealed from me, what I need never have known.

"Oh! no, indeed!" I exclaimed to myself.
"I shall hear nothing further about that frightful man, I shall never again encounter that overbearing gaze, and we shall mingle our breaths no more in the atmosphere of the same room! And never again, in my presence, at least, shall his

hairy hand fondle yours, placid and submissive woman!"

Three days later, when she came to see me, she at first saw no change in me. My anger had gradually deposited its sediment in my soul, and my soul was now filled to the brim with limpid sorrow. With the appearance of calm, I felt myself wounded unto death. Stricken to the heart, I preserved my former demeanour, like those vermilion fruits whose delicate and closedrawn skin covers a pulp that is being deyoured by an invisible worm. Accordingly. she suspected nothing. Nevertheless, while I was speaking to her about ourselves, and, in fact, about everything with the exception of what was engaging her thoughts so completely, she seemed to be waiting with anxiety. At last, finding that I had exhausted my factitious eloquence, and feeling myself impelled by a wish to take revenge upon her for the hitherto unknown sorrow of which she was the innocent cause, I said bitterly to her:

"You want to know what I think of your

husband; and perhaps you will be very pleased if the judgment which you are expecting is not unfavourable to him. But, Fanny, you shall never know the feeling with which he inspires me."

It seemed to me that, as she heard these strange words, all her heart's blood gushed into her face. Poor conciliating woman! She had looked forward with such sweet pleasure to drawing me to her house, to seeing me a little oftener, to uniting me to all the dear, sweet beings that peopled her heart!

"Why this change, Roger?" she murmured with a painful effort.

"Because!—" I exclaimed in exasperation.

But then I saw her face covered with tears. Immediately, throwing myself at her feet and entwining her with my arms, I said gently to her:

"Because I am horribly unhappy, Fanny!
Because I am jealous!"

Stupefied, she rose at these words, not repelling me, but holding me back with both her hands which she had laid upon my shoulders, while I, devoid of comprehension, remained on my knees. She looked at me long and deeply, probing to the smallest recesses of my troubled thought. Then she slightly elevated her shoulders.

"Child! Poor dear child!" she said, stooping to kiss me closely on the eyes.

And from that time she never reverted to the subject of her own accord.

But I mused mournfully and unceasingly upon it, and I could not refrain from speaking about it. Then she caressed me; she lectured me; she scolded me.

"You are wasting your time," she sometimes said to me, smiling and drawing me to her when I dwelt at too great a length on the cause of my griefs.

And her hands were fastened about my neck with dainty suppleness, her glances gently compelled my own, her lips, with a graceful, feline expression, sought vaguely for mine. But it was in vain. My mouth could no longer gather itself to enjoy the kisses of love. It could only distort itself for the emission of sobs.

### CHAPTER XVII.

It was from that fatal day that I began to endure great tortures. The image of this man had been suddenly encrusted upon my memory, and, do what I might, I could not succeed in tearing it away. To everyone else he might be ridiculous; but do not think that he was so to me. To me he was sinister, he was terrible; and every night I with terror saw him rising in my sleep to murder the phantom of my happiness.

He was very happy, for he suspected nothing. This drama, which had been begun in the raptures of love, and which was now being prolonged amid anxieties, terrors, and despair, had no existence for him. We had been so prudent!

What an odious reversal of parts! It was I who was jealous of him. The ravisher suffered, by and through the fact of possession. He could not even fall back upon exciting the suspicions of the dispossessed husband in order to make him share his tortures.

And I felt myself obliged to be distrustful of him, to be occupied by the thought of him! In spite of myself, I had to double like a hare in order to avoid him. The supporting of this fugitive, timorous character lowered me to a coward's level. Heavens! how gladly would I have been devoid of love!

But these evils were nothing in comparison with those which the future had in store for me. I had only just entered upon a path wasted with quagmires, and bordered by frightful precipices, and I had not even a suspicion of all the fatigues which the traversing of it must involve to me.

Thenceforward, whether, bent over the hearth in my silent room, I sought to beguile my present sorrow by striving to muse upon bygone loves; or, urging my fiery horse at speed across the

plains, risked my life a hundred times in order to break my body with fatigue, and direct upon it the weariness of my brain; or craved forgetfulness in the wild debauch, drinking deep draughts of wine, which never equalled one drop of the water of Lethe: or staked my fortune upon a single throw of the dice, that I might at least suffer from an emotion other than that which I abhorred; or finally, shrouded in the curtains of my alcove, spent my entire nights in sorrowfully evoking the phantoms of the beloved ones whom I have lost; never, in musing, or in danger, or in intoxication, or at play, or even in the recollection of my dead mother, did I succeed in stifling the serpent that was devouring my heart. With me, the fatal vision smiled upon the loves of my youth; with me it lashed my terrified horse; it dipped its pale lips with a sneer into my glass: it rattled the dice in the leathern box; aye, and with me it dreamed of my mother. On the surface of all my recollections, of all the charming, moving, terrible scenes that I reconstructed in my memory, were ceaselessly accentuated other recollections and other images which, rising from the depths of my soul, effaced them. And I was at last obliged to accept these abominable recollections, to front these fatal images, for they compelled me. Vanquished by them, I faced them at last!

Then it was horrible, humiliating, mournful! Only one who loves can form a dim idea of my tortures. All was distinct and clear; not the faintest doubt could be cherished. At first I represented my mistress, sweet and fair, elegantly dressed, with her look of surprise and purity, seated beside the fireplace in her drawing-room; or, perhaps, at her own table in the place of honour, opposite to her husband, and surrounded by her friends and children. Always courteous, she had for each some one of those delicate attentions which are the charming expression of kindliness of heart. And especially to him, to the ruler, did she show herself gracious. Was it not necessary to anticipate the suspicions of so clear-seeing a man? How could she abstain from always showing fondness towards him?

Moreover, they had both an equal share in so many common affairs: their interests, their children. In short, they dwelt together; they never separated; they saw each other at all hours, whether they were sad or gay. And then what natural effusiveness! He was the lion reigning over this adorable existence! And I was the timorous, pillaging wolf with burning eye and breathless body, who, at the risk of a thousand dangers, and by exposing himself to a thousand degrading humiliations, to the lash as well as to the gun, lurked, and from time to time, in the shadow, robbed him, while he slept, of some few remnants of his share.

Oh! that it was which humiliated me! But now I come to what pierced my heart. I could not succeed in suspending the incessant labour of my evocations. With what pleasure did I complete them, dwelling upon my griefs? Then the scene would change, and I depicted Fanny to myself at evening alone with him, after the departure of the children, in the closed room where the tea smoked in the cups, beneath the

softened light from the lamp, beside the fire nestling gently in the hot ashes. Then, she was looking at him with those eyes which I loved so well. She was talking with him, pleasant, compliant, speaking little in order to leave the pleasure of speech to him, submissive as is fitting in a woman when she is beautiful and her master is strong. And do not imagine that I paused at these images of captivating intimacy! It was not possible. I continued them, I exaggerated them-nay, I added others to them. This, too, was inevitable. It was late; the flame was expiring on the darkened hearth, the light from the dying lamp was being stifled beneath the shade, every sound was being hushed in house and street; the step of the belated passenger on the pavement, sonorous once more, indicated an hour for rest and pleasure. The servants, too, were in bed, like the children. Thus, they were alone. And they were married!

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# CHAPTER XVIII.

When I reached this point I turned pale. Something in the deepest recess of my heart was struggling and dying in convulsions of despair. These images, nightly evoked, made me more unhappy than if my mistress had been struck before my eyes. I got up, I looked at the clock, and then I broke forth into laughter like a madman, or else, covering my face with my arms, buried myself in my bed and wept.

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#### CHAPTER XIX.

In the morning I awoke from my nightmare, more worn-out than a man who is smitten with tetanus! And ever as I dragged myself to my window to breathe a little fresh air, I could feel the same question unfolding on my lips like a poisonous flower.

"Why did she once love him? For she did love him, as I have learnt; she allowed him to carry her off from her relations, who were unwilling to ally themselves to a man of no fortune or position. He has grown rich since then, for he is energetic and patient. He possesses strength of will. But why did she love him? And above

all, why does she love me now? We are so different from each other!"

At last one day, ransacking this thought and winnowing the fragments of it in my brain, I thought that I was about to fathom my mistress's conduct. As I recollected how sensitive she was to endearments; as I depicted to myself the most intoxicating scenes of our love and compared myself with her husband, I felt myself blush, and something more acrid than disgust, more bitter than contempt, more poisoned than hatred, rose from my heart to my lips.

"That does not explain why she loves me now," I said to myself, shaking my head.

Then analysis came once more to my assistance, but only to deal me a fresh stab.

"She loves me for the sake of change," I resumed, with bitterness, "for the sake of satisfying, by means of an exaggerated contrast, a more refined and sentimental desire. Unless," I added, without at first realising the cruelty of my supposition, "it be for the sake of completing her ideal—

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"But, then," I exclaimed, starting to my feet in an unspeakable terror, "then I am but half of a man to her! I occupy but the half of a heart! I have been measured and have been found incomplete! I am nothing but an addition, an accessory!—Oh! horrible!"

## CHAPTER XX.

Sometimes I made my escape from my abode as from a prison, and went to beguile my interminable musings amid the crowd which encumbers the promenades. On finding myself again in the midst of happy, indifferent, busy people, on enjoying in spite of myself the first balmy breathings of spring, I ceased to believe myself entirely wretched, and I qualified my monstrous hallucinations with childishness.

"This is jealousy," I said to myself, "and it-is making me absurd."

And as at every step I met such numbers of young and elegant women, leaning on the arms of men who looked about with a wearied air, and scarcely spoke to them, I added:

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"How many women live beneath the same roof as their husbands without ever seeing them? After four years of married life the husband becomes a friend—perhaps not so much! He exists to all the world except to his wife!"

But my doubts, a thousand times more heartbreaking than before, were not long in seizing me again, and I sought in vain to drive them from my mind. I knew myself well enough to be convinced that I should never acquire that spirit of accommodation characteristic of my age which permits a woman's lover to press the hand of her husband, even though he were his friend! Moreover, I was not willing to court this ruler. nor comply with his humour, nor seek to gain his confidence and friendship, nor become indispensable to him. Were suspicions ever to assail him, I could conjecture how many platitudes I should have to utter, how many lies I should have to invent, how many humiliations and mortifications I should have to endure in order to dispel them. And I was already only too sensible of degradation!

"I will go no further," I would say to myself; "already there is only too much mire upon my path!"

More wearied, more troubled, than at my departure, I would then turn homewards. The smiles of spring made me long to weep. The warmth of the atmosphere dulled all my thoughts. The spectacle and tumult of the crowd in the end became even more insupportable to me than the silence of my solitude.

### CHAPTER XXI.

In exchange for these evils which, though dulled, were none the less cruel, I received no consolation whatever. My pleasures were faded. Doubt had soiled their fresh blossoms with its foul breath. My senses were scarcely appeared when I felt the hooked hand of misanthropy fastening inflexibly upon my shoulder. The memory of the man whom, in the logic of my passion, I denominated my rival, came constantly with grim irony like the phantom of eternal punishment between my mistress and myself, to poison our caresses. I could find traces of him in the words, the gestures, the manners, the very habits of the woman I worshipped. He had been moulded in the arms that strained me to

her heart; he had blended with the blood that circulated in disordered waves through her arteries; he had been imprinted upon her absorbed countenance, upon her pale forehead, in her lifeless eyes; he kissed me, and he sighed with her.

How, then, did I envy all my forsaken friends who diverted themselves daily with the gentle clink of glasses, the brilliant ring of gold pieces in motion on the green cloth of the gaming table, the light peals of laughter from licentious women! And all scorned lovers who with open arms and melting eyes pursue in their dreams a lofty shadow! And even all separated lovers!

"Did any of them," I said piteously to myself, "ever suffer from his fruitless love as much as I suffer from my divided love?"

Cruel mockery of possession! When thou dost not weary us of thy favours thou soilest them for us!

### CHAPTER XXII.

FINALLY, I felt myself saddened by a sort of debasement, which, in spite of myself, my idol had just undergone in my thought. Hitherto I had paid her genuine worship; she was the realization of my purest and most angelic dream, and I had grown to see in her something sacred that nothing could tarnish nor degrade. now it seemed to me that she had voluntarily descended from the altar on which my piety had placed her to soil her feet by contact with the earth. Here, as I then recognised, was the first and most cruel effect of jealousy, which always begins by infusing into us for the poisoning of our veins a horrible mingling of worship, natred, frenzy and contempt.

# CHAPTER XXIII.

In a short time I comprehended that there was henceforth a duel to the death between Fanny and myself. A certain grossness rising like mire from the depths of my heart was polluting all my thoughts; respect was dying within me; I had brutal ideas of strife; I experienced a bitter desire to chastise rudely the inoffensive and graceful being whom I loved to distraction! I wished to degrade her in my own presence, even more insolently than her image had already been degraded in my memory.

"How can she bring herself to it?" I said to myself with frenzy, striking my forehead with my clenched fists. "Oh! what a loathsome mockery is the purity of women! Does it not

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appear that kisses are fleeting things, and that when they have wiped their lips nothing is left behind?"

At last, worn out, I began to communicate to Fanny the tortures which up to that time I had kept to myself alone. Men cannot suffer long without weakly laying the burden of their troubles upon those whom they love most.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

"You knew that I was married."

Such was the supreme reason which with an air of timidity she logically opposed to my earliest and as yet feeble complaints.

"And did you not know that I might possess delicacy of soul," I replied, "and could you not, when giving yourself, foresee the torments that your love must inevitably cause me? How do you live together?" I said to her after that, without any preface, and exerting a great effort upon myself.

She blushed. She was offended.

"We must not speak of that, Roger," she replied, coldly.

But she saw me so unhappy that in pity she

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spoke, doing violence to her chastest feelings. This was to increase my torture.

But she did not tell me all. Impelled by a wild desire to be acquainted with the extent of my misfortune, wishing to know at all costs at what precise point he stopped short, I pressed her. She blushed again with shame. As for myself, I was pallid and as though suffocated. She closed my lips with her hand. We remained silent. She looked at me for a long time. I wept; she wept. Drinking the bitter cup to the last drop of the dregs, she at last declared herself ready to answer me.

Then, with an embarrassment which at first I could not have suspected, with a hesitation which obscured my words and stifled with their abundance the glimmering of my intention, with a cruel agitation increased by the anguish of jealous hearts, I questioned her about a thousand things which tended to unveil their private existence to me, twisting and involving my thought in the skein of evasions, circumlocutions and periphrases, as though I would fain retard the moment for

learning what I dreaded to hear. She answered me with an air of simplicity, herself embarrassed no less than I, but bravely surmounting the shame of this unprecedented cross-examination in order to allay the intensity of my distress, and to give me an instance of the mortifications that may be surmounted by a woman who loves when the man whom she loves is unhappy.

And then I experienced something like a monstrous succession of endearments and blows; a nameless mingling of balms and poisons; a horrible association of mortifications and glorifications. The execrable fact that she was not her own remained unimpaired; but all the tearful consolations, whose flattering caresses could diminish whatever was corrosive or humiliating, she lavished open-handed upon me, watching my face timorously for the effect produced by the embarrassed but intelligible words that she uttered. At a last question, more brutal than all the rest, which I put to her abruptly, there was such a superb outburst of revolt on her part that I threw myself at her II4 FANNY.

feet to pray for forgiveness. I must trust her. I had gone too far in the suppositions of my jealousy. If Fanny was divided, she was unable to think of the division without horror.

Certainly, had I loved her less, I might have felt elated by this cruel confession which she accompanied with so many consolations, by the tears which streamed upon her countenance while she showed me the bleeding wound of her life. I might, perhaps, have been proud and grateful, or, at least, touched by so much sorrow and humiliation; but my mind was occupied by only one thought, which carried me out of myself. Apart from her I had ceased to understand or to think about anything. Thus I could find no gentle word to reply, and contented myself with showing some anxiety for her repose.

"Your husband must be distrustful, seeing you changed; for you loved him once."

At this abomination she shrugged her shoulders without drying her tears.

"O, Roger! Roger!" she said to me, "the misfortune is that you are, and ever will be,

nothing but a child. You listen without understanding. Do you imagine our husbands think about us? What woman would take a lover if her husband gave her what a lover gives her? Not only courtesies, attentions, assiduity, friendship, but, above all, a little love!"

# CHAPTER XXV.

This painful discussion caused Fanny to grow in my esteem, but it did not comfort me. What mattered to me at bottom the imperceptible shade of intention? The fact, in its brutality, remained. I now reproached myself for the inquisitiveness of my jealousy which had robbed me of the very shadow of the doubt that at times I had still cherished.

The effect of Fanny's last words was, therefore, incapable of attenuating my grief, beneath the burning pressure of which I thought only of vanquishing what was invincible. I watched my mistress's looks as though to estimate her strength before attacking her again. But when

our eyes had met we could not hold out for long. All thought of strife disappeared from my mind, all desire of resistance fled from her heart, and the embrace that united us was so close that once more we tasted unreservedly a minute of genuine happiness.

# CHAPTER XXVI.

Fanny must have been as much pained as I was by the strange confession which I had extorted from her; but so impersonal was she that from the day on which I allowed her to see all my troubles she suddenly concealed from me all her own, and as though she wished gracefully to invite me to master the impulsiveness of my disposition, she now brought me nothing but smiles. Poor woman! She used to come to see me in frightful weather, and her most engrossing occupation was the forging of such falsehoods as might justify her absence for two hours every week. She was now braving the shames of spring as she had faced the snows of winter.

She never so much as spoke to me of the annoyances which she must of necessity have undergone in snatching a few hours of freedom from the strict slavery of her household. laughed softly at her wet toilet as she, with much difficulty, drew off her gloves, fastened up her uncurled hair and stretched out the tips of her smoking boots to the fire. She was proud at finding herself with me at last, happy at having met nobody, pleased when she saw me a little less sad. The vanquishing of obstacles, the preservation of her secret, the management of the world's esteem, the carefulness for my quietude—all these prevented her from being sensible of fatigue.

"There is no perfect happiness," she used to say to me in her tenderest tones, and with a sigh; "we are both paying sorrow the interest on our love; but this love is so sweet that the interest which sorrow receives does not seem exorbitant to me."

She never grew bitter during our discussions; she was never the first to speak of her duties, I20 FANNY.

which counted for much to her, and the greater part of which she had sacrificed to me. With her wonderful womanly instinct, she perceived that she could not speak of her duties to me without incensing my pride, and she respected my pride as something the wounding of which must inevitably cause me pain. Nor did I ever surprise in her the faintest suspicion of remorse. But did she feel any?

"What precautions," I would say to myself, when alone, "she must be obliged to take for the concealment of our love! What inventions, and calculations, and stratagems in order to succeed in avoiding all discussion concerning her absences! What concessions in order to escape discovery! Poor woman, she risks so much! She has so much to lose; and I have so little! Ah! I am a wicked man to torment her."

She treated me kindly, as though I were a child, and, frankly, I deserved it. How many things in her life I could feel that she hid from me lest she should cause me pain!

I was never willing to understand that there might be days on which she found it altogether impossible to go out, and that the most trivial visit was sufficient to keep her at home. I used to suspect her on these occasions of abominable calculations. I used to declare that she had lied to me. I used to think that she found excitement and fatigue in the division which she affirmed that she detested.

I used to hate her.

"I pity you!" she would murmur, when I had suffered her to view the horrors of my sickly thought.

Sometimes, however, half forgetting my personal sorrows to penetrate into the depths of my conscience, I said to myself:

"When I have tortured her greatly, when she goes away from here in tears, distracted in mind, and heart-broken, how does she contrive at home to disguise the torments which prey upon her, to mask her countenance with her customary air of tranquillity, to become again the smiling woman whom I used to know? Is it by caresses that

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she anticipates the suspicions of a husband who is hard to deceive? Ah! how well I feel that she must weep with her children! They cost her so many painful endeavours! And how well, too, do I feel that they divine the secret of her tears! And how certain it is that, like herself, as good and as discreet, they staunch them with their little hands and do not betray them!"

She suffered dreadfully. With sorrow I saw that she was growing pale. Without mentioning it to her, I noted the dark ring which marbled the circle of her enfeebled eyes, and imparted to her gaze a strange expression of pity; I noted her contracted lips and the furrows which now ascending from her forehead were lost amid her silky hair, like the visible symbols of mournful thoughts; altogether I was moved to pity by the look of forlornness which in my presence imparted an air of languor to her entire person. Only in my presence did she relax the strictness of her demeanour, and I willingly forgave her; she must have been so wearied with playing the part of a happy woman.

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She would have been so proud to be able to acknowledge everything, and to live openly with me without shame!

"Do not leave me!" she sometimes said to me; "you are as necessary to me as light!"

Sometimes, also, she added:

"The proof to me that I love you is that I love all of you, even your sweet egotism, even your anger, even your sublime injustice!"

Then she would suddenly become silent, as though some lugubrious thought which she dared not avow harassed her without intermission. I looked at her. She shook her head. At last, wringing her hands:

"To betray, always to betray!" she would exclaim. "That is the horrible thing that poisons everything, even the very thought of my own happiness. I am the most miserable of creatures. God has not given me strength, and all my life I shall bear the penalty of my weakness. I have always lived otherwise than I wished to live; have always missed what I wished to do. To betray! Heavens, how I detest myself!"

Then I seized her in my arms to comfort her, but I could find nothing to reply.

"Whom does she mean?" I used to say to myself, foolishly enough.

It could only be of the fact of betrayal; but I knew her imperfectly as yet, and, applying to myself the words uttered by her conscience, I felt happy and proud.

All this moved me, sometimes even to tears. Then I made brave resolutions.

"Let us keep all troubles to ourselves," I said to myself, "and give her nothing but consolation."

In pity, I then for a moment forgot my own sorrows; I shook off the lassitude of the abstraction that weighed upon me, to abandon myself to the most ardent transports of passion; I again became gentle and tender, and more submissive and affectionate than the faithful dog which, after a long interval, encounters the gaze of his beloved master. I poured out to my dear mistress in torrents the wine of praise; and I became frivolous and loquacious, touching on

twenty topics at once in my conversation with her, laughing immoderately, and, above all, carefully avoiding the utterance of a word having even an indirect bearing upon the customary subject of my torments. But the assumption of this heroic part, which I played but badly, did not deceive her. She gazed at me in stupefaction. She shook her head as she listened to me. Was she conscious that on the day on which I had lost my jealousy I should also have lost my love?

But these fits of heroism on my part could not last for long. It was with a sigh like that of one relieved of a heavy weight, that she used to see me assume my morose demeanour once more.

# CHAPTER XXVII.

I ENDED, to my great disgrace, by tacitly accepting the situation. But thenceforward there was ever between us something that could not be effaced; a single, constant thought which tormented our mutual hearts. We closed our lips to prevent it from springing forth, but we felt it always present within us like a sharp pang, which at times wrung imprecations from us. Then a single cry was sufficient to induce a sudden explosion, and I, in particular, forgot the resolutions of my pride to give free vent to the sorrow that preyed upon me. I did not wish to speak of my rival, but I spoke of him incessantly. His name lacerated my memory and writhed like an asp between my teeth. Scarcely was it uttered when

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a thousand scorching questions came in its train. I wanted to know him still better. I wanted to learn all that he was, all that he did, all that he said. Then Fanny became grave; she thought for a long time before replying to me, so as not to contradict or belie herself; then she showed signs of impatience, and knit her eyebrows.

"Men are insatiable," she would say, to my great surprise. "Can you not be satisfied with being loved? Why do you unceasingly busy yourself with what goes on at home?"

After these discussions I parted from her in sadness, and a week afterwards I awaited her coming—furious, exasperated by spite, with my mouth full of sarcasms—determined to break brutally with her. But, at the mere sight of her, all my anger passed away like smoke, and I cast myself at her feet and clasped her convulsively to my heart.

Nothing surprised me more nor provoked me more greatly than the docility with which she submitted without a murmur to it all. Absence, obstacles, hindrances, appeared to have no effect

upon her. Whether she saw me, or did not see me, it was all one. Her countenance continued calm. She assumed the attitude of a victim, and said nothing.

"What if I were to kill myself?" I exclaimed one day.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Or if some unforeseen accident separated us?"

"What would you have?" she said.

Then she began to weep.

Being unable to pass my life at her side, I should at least have wished to rule her own so that her slightest inspirations might come from me alone. She understood my intention, and showed herself touched by it; but she never yielded to me on the delicate point which she had made one of honour.

"I am obliged to submit to the position which fate has assigned to me," she used to say; "why seek to penetrate its secrets? You are grieved if I speak; you are grieved if I am silent; try, my dear Roger, to forget these causes of sadness. I forget them when I come here."

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"You are too exclusive!" she sometimes added, half smiling and half pouting. "According to you I should love no one but yourself."

Nevertheless, impelled constantly by my fixed idea, and unable to admit that she could place her own will before mine. I used stratagem with her, addressing myself exclusively to her pity; and at last I reached such a degree of baseness that, in despair at feeling myself the only sufferer. I exerted all my influence to exact from this unfortunate woman the pursuance of a line of conduct completely opposed to that which her husband had marked out for her. I was well aware, when acting thus, that her hitherto peaceful home would become a hell, and I counted upon the fact! Through weariness, she for a few days meekly followed my counsels, and then she found herself in a position between her two masters like that of iron softened by heat between hammer and anvil. We were both without intermission bruising her heart. At last, impelled by the torment as well as by a sort of spirit of rectitude, she said to me:

"Roger, you are advising me badly, for you are making me disturb his peace."

I was struck with dismay, and ceased to employ this new manner of torture, because it was a cruel mortification to me to see her rise up in defence of her husband. Fanny, moreover, seemed to be tired of these humiliating and painful debates.

"I am afraid of wearying her," I said to myself one day.

# CHAPTER XXVIII.

But in my most violent fits of jealousy, I was enraged at finding her air of chastity constantly on her countenance. She always preserved it, even amid the maddest intoxication of pleasure. This in time became provoking. It was in vain that I depraved her, seeking to stifle my love in the ashes of satiety; she remained ever the same. Two souls of very different natures issued from her lips and eyes. The first was that of an absorbed and serious Phryne, fed on the daintiest and earliest of delicacies, as on the most corroding spices of a passion that was from time to time denoted by a strange, vague smile. The second

was that of an immaculate angel. Ah! her glances! That expression of surprise which shone perpetually in her blue, wide eyes, beneath the loose and mobile lids. I can feel them following me and ravishing me still! I can feel them ever present, resting upon my own! They question me, they fascinate me! Shall I never forget her eyes?

There was at times something in the carriage of her head, in her attitude, in her gait, which revealed appetites of deep and decided sensualism, and even something of that monstrous practice of division which debased her so greatly in my eyes. Suddenly, at a single word, she would be metamorphosed, and it was as though there were a different being before you.

"What manner of woman are you?" I said to her after a discussion, during which she had displayed to me the most opposite sentiments.

She raised her brow and looked at me with her clear, tranquil eyes; but an inward emotion dilated her nostrils and faintly reddened her cheeks. "I cannot live without loving," she replied, slowly; "I cannot live without being loved. My qualities, my faults, are secondary matters; they belong to all women. But my passion is mine alone."

And, with loyal exaltation, she added:

"Do you understand me?"

### CHAPTER XXIX.

SUMMER succeeded to these numerous and painful discussions. Every year Fanny spent this season in the country, in the neighbourhood of Paris. One day she announced to me with blushes the sad news of her departure, but I plainly refused to submit to her absence.

"We shall write to each other," she said.

This resignation exasperated me. I do not know what I replied to her—I have forgotten; but I remember that I combated her resolution with the energy of despair. I shed so many tears, I was so troubled and unhappy, that she suffered herself to be moved. Clasping me in her

arms, she repeated to me a thousand times that she consented to adopt any means that I devised.

"Be prudent! Above all, do not compromise me," she said between two kisses as she was going away.

A week later I was proceeding in the direction of Chaville. Her house stood beside the high road to Versailles. When I heard midnight strike by the distant clocks I scaled the wall and advanced towards a summer house, the situation of which she had indicated to me. As I was keeping myself concealed in the shadow of the trees I saw, twenty paces off, a gray, motionless form. It was she. I ran to her; she drewme in. I closed the door. We were without a light.

"Do not speak," she said in my ear, with extraordinary agitation, "he has been uneasy for three days past; he has been gloomy; he must have suspicions."

This was a novel variation in the sorrow of my existence, and one upon which I had not reckoned.

"Listen to this," she murmured, in tones that

were abrupt through terror. "He must not suspect; he must not know; I will not have it. You are a man, and it is for you to show me what conduct I ought to pursue. Speak, and if you must speak of sacrifice, do not be afraid; I am strong."

And, as though she felt herself failing on seeing me distracted with grief, she said bitterly:

"I had forgotten that you are yourself only a child. Forgive me for having spoken to you as to a man."

"Fanny," I said gravely to her, drawing her so as to make her sit down beside me, "I am perhaps only a child, but I have the courage of a man. Surprised suddenly by this frightful news, I do not know what plan to devise; but since you are so strong, decide yourself what we ought to do, and I will submit to it. Must I leave you? Speak the word. By the memory of my mother you shall, if you wish it, never see me again, though you were to seek me the wide world over."

"I do not wish you to die!" she said, in

muffled tones, rising and tapping with her foot.

Then she seized my head in both her hands, and kissed me convulsively on the lips.

But the sound of footsteps creaking on the gravel hushed us. Holding each other round the waist, we leaned towards the window-pane to see who was walking thus in the park at such an hour. It was HE! I recognised him by the breadth of his shoulders, by his grevish hair which fluttered in the wind above his bare forehead. He was advancing parallel to the summerhouse along the broad uncovered walk, which was flooded by the bright rays of the moon as they fell perpendicularly upon him. He walked with measured steps, his arms behind his back, his head sunk, his features strained like a man dragging some weighty thought after him. He passed in front of us, and was lost beneath the high trees.

I was obliged to uphold the unhappy woman in my arms, for her knees would no longer support her.

"Take courage," I said to her; "your husband has no suspicions. His mind is occupied; but nothing about him reveals the feverish restlessness of jealousy. I have observed myself, and I know what it is."

"Do you think so?" she exclaimed, with a flood of hope, which made her quiver.

"I am certain of it. Now let us part. I shall return in a week. Observe him well between this and then. I do not know what is troubling him, but I, whom you always denominate a child, I tell you this: Your husband is not jealous."

### CHAPTER XXX.

When she was gone I rushed in headlong pursuit of the nocturnal rambler. I caught sight of him again at the turning of a walk. As on the first occasion, he passed in front of me without perceiving me, still gloomy and wrapped in meditation. I strove to catch some involuntary word that might have revealed to me the cause of his abstraction. But his mouth was closed, and his brow impassive. Going up again towards the house, he increased his pace. On the threshold he paused, looked at the starry sky with startling earnestness, and stretched out his arms towards it, as though some threatening prayer had been breathed from his heart.

"And so he, too, is unhappy!" I mentally exclaimed.

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

I SPENT the following week in unspeakable anguish. I could not keep quiet. Fears and suspicions besieged my mind. And it was of her alone that I thought! Something persistent and convincing told me that I was threatened with the loss of Fanny. The image of a violent separation reared itself before me like a spectre. I knew not how to combine this species of prevision with the certainty that her husband suspected nothing; but the prevision asserted itself so strongly that I could not but consider it a warning from heaven.

On the same day of the following week, at my customary hour, I set out; but this time I did not think of waiting for an appointed time, nor of hiding in order to introduce myself into the presence of my mistress. No. I went straight forward with the directness of a cannon ball, resolved to penetrate even to her own room in search of her, if I did not find her in the summer-house. Fearing the worst, without being able to define the reason of my fears, I spurred my horse, which, close to the ground in his stretching gallop, was alternately drawn together and extended like a great bow tortured by feverish hands. The moon threw her light across the silent road that I was following, striping it with silver bands, and seeming to turn with melancholy towards me to pursue me with her pale gaze. The trees filed past, swift and dark, like phantoms caught perilously in a wheel. The dogs sleeping in the courtyards rushed out, barking beneath the gates at the inordinate noise of my horse's shoes beating upon the stones! And the wind which lashed my face murmured exciting words in my ears.

Everything was driving me on and causing me to have a presentiment of some drama in which

I was to play a part. I was arming myself for this part, fully determined not to succumb without contending with all the strength which for a long time past had been afforded me by despair. How exaggerated I was in my expectation and in my preparations! My enthusiastic spirit dreamed of nothing but superhuman combats, wild disinterestedness, heroic efforts!

Alas! the most vulgar of denouements was awaiting me.

#### CHAPTER XXXII.

On crossing the wall, I was surprised to see Fanny seated on a bench by the side of a walk. I was more than an hour too soon, and I immediately dreaded that her husband had not yet come in. But, as soon as she saw me, she came to meet me without concealment, as though it were a natural thing that I should introduce myself into her home by the entrance of malefactors. I took her hand. Her demeanour was anxious in its turn, and embarrassed.

"What has happened?" I said to her, drawing her beneath the trees.

"You were only too much in the right, Roger," she replied; "my husband is not jealous. He has more confidence in me than ever. I had not the trouble of questioning him. Yesterday he

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confided to me the cause of his secret abstraction. His whole fortune, which is invested in England, is compromised by the failure of a banker. He left this morning to save some fragments of it, if there be yet time. He must be very uneasy," she added, with a sigh, "for he was never so open with me before."

I could not find a single word to reply to this distressing news, which, nevertheless, relieved us both of so great a weight. I was stunned like a man who has just received a violent blow on the head. Sareasms rose to my lips, but I did not suffer them to pass.

- "You make no reply, dear," she said to me.
- "What reply can I make?" I exclaimed, losing all consciousness of my brutality; "I pity you if you are much attached to the luxury of which you are about to be deprived. I pity you especially on account of your children; but—"
  - "But—?" she repeated.
- "But I cannot pity you for having been threatened with the loss of me, and for finding you to-day more free than ever to love me!"

With an expression of compassion she raised both hands in the air, as though to call Heaven to witness.

"Let us never speak of myself," she said, gently; "I shall always be nothing but a sealed book to you."

After that we walked slowly beneath the trees for half an hour, without taking each other's arm or uttering a word. At last she stopped in front of me, took both my hands, and said to me in a submissive voice:

- "Why do you not speak, Roger?"
- "I should have nothing comforting to say to you.
  - " Why?"
- "Because I myself, perhaps, need to be comforted."
  - "Why, what is the matter with you?"
  - "Nothing."

We resumed our walk afresh, going at random among the trees without speaking, she bending down beneath the branches, and I lifting the branches to let her pass. "Now you will see how we shall suffer through his troubles!" I exclaimed, suddenly.

"That must be," she replied, tranquilly.

The close of our interview was saddened by a beginning such as I had been unable to foresee. Fanny's thoughts were elsewhere. So equally, in spite of myself, were mine. And yet I could not avoid feeling a sort of troubled joy at the thought of an event which might detach her for ever from her husband.

"Who knows," I said to myself, "whether her ruin will not do what my grief has been unable to effect?"

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

AFTER that day we met again only at Paris. It was easy for Fanny to absent herself now that she no longer had to account to any one for her absences. Thus we resumed our former life. But what I had foreseen was realised with distressing strictness. It was no longer Fanny's thoughts, it was her life itself that was elsewhere. I felt this more and more. Our tranquillity, our pleasures, our outpourings, our joys, depended absolutely upon the letters written to her by her husband. If the postman did not come, she was abstracted, and did not listen to me. When she had received a disquieting letter in the morning, she was preoccupied and silent. When the letter

was of an encouraging nature, there was a sudden outburst of love and merriment. But this merriment often pained me more than her sadness, and the love, the outburst of which was now subordinate to something external to itself, revolted me.

Icy to her anxiety, dumb to her sadness, irritable to her merriment, I energetically refused to accept the reaction from the tidings which engaged her thoughts, and I perceived that she was none the more grieved, that she appeared none the more anxious, for my humorousness. And that drove me to despair.

At last, tired of finding myself thus bound to my rival by the woman who, dividing herself equally between us, gave all her thoughts to that one of us whom she judged to have the most pressing need of her sympathies; indignant at suffering through his troubles, and at looking anxiously for his joys, upon which alone my own now depended; impelled by grief, by jealousy, by misfortune, I resolved to essay a supreme effort to recover my peace by separating her from him.

For a long time I had been brooding in

thought over a desire to exact from Fanny the greatest sacrifice that she could make for me; but, restrained by the vague dread of a refusal, as mortifying as it would be painful, I put off the moment of making the request from day to day. An opportunity presented itself. It was she who provided me with it.

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### CHAPTER XXXIV.

"A woman who is not her own mistress," she said to me one day with abrupt self-retrospection, and looking at me with compassion, "cannot love without making her lover the unhappiest of men. The more I observe myself, Roger, the more I feel that often, in spite of myself, I must cause you much pain."

Touched by this opening, I stammered out in reply:

- "Yet our union might be a happy one."
- "Yes," she said, bitterly; "the only disturbing element between us is love. This is the secret punishment of such a union, which can last only if it be common-place, and which in that case must revolt a proud and delicate heart. If

close and deep, it inevitably becomes its own torment."

She sighed, and I answered:

"I will go further than you, Fanny. Even if a lover has only a fancy for his mistress, he must still be pained by a partition which outrages all human feeling. Pride has, like love, its jealousies, its shames, its tortures. No matter how a lover loves, he is always cognisant of a husband's existence. Happier, as a rule, the husband is not aware of the lover's."

"That is going rather far," she said, in a low voice.

Then, elevating her shoulders, she raised her eyes towards Heaven, and exclaimed:

"Heavens! What a thing is pride."

Delighted to find Fanny in such a frame of mind, I became bolder. I took her hand, standing before her, while she looked kindly at me.

"Yet if you were only willing," I said to her with prayer-like utterance.

She blushed immediately, perceiving that she had made too great an advance.

"What do you wish me to understand?"

I dared not say more. But doubtless she divined my thoughts, for she pressed my hand tenderly, sighed again, and exclaimed: "Child!"

I shook my head.

"Leave me!" she said suddenly, in a short tone; "perhaps you will be cured. I cannot make you happy. Get married!"

She was annihilated with grief.

I roughly repulsed her hand, and looked at her in anger on hearing an expression which appeared to me a piece of bravado. But she was so heart-broken that I had not courage enough to go to extremities with her, and with my lips I murmured:

- "You know that such a thing is impossible!"
- "I have given you," she returned, "all the affection that my heart could yield, and you punish me for it!"

She was offended; it was necessary to soothe her, and to promise submission; but she felt sore against me.

"But what more could I do?" she cried.

"If you love me, as I believe you do," I replied, "your duty lies plain before you."

She blushed again; she had understood.

- "My duty! My duty! You are very imprudent, Roger, to utter such a word. Do you not know that my strictest duty enjoins me not to leave the house that is under my control?"
- "Ah! Fanny!" I cried, "what platitude are you setting up against me to wound me!"
- "The house," she rejoined, casting down her eyes, "is the post of honour entrusted to women. Women who respect themselves never leave it."

I tried to interrupt her, but she went on, soothed suddenly, and looking tenderly at me:

- "Just reason a little, dear child; can a woman forsake her family without forfeiting her own esteem? Can she openly free herself from all her duties without, in the eyes of the world, sinking into the crowd of lost women?"
- "The world's opinions are melancholy enough," I replied, "if you set them over against my life."

We remained silent for a few minutes. At last she resumed:

"If I followed the advice which you are satisfied with allowing me to guess, because you are too honourable a man to give it openly to me, some day you could not but make me repent of it."

I tried to protest, but she interrupted me:

"Can we suppress the past? And are you not jealous even of the past? Oh! I am not vexed with you for it!" she added, rising and throwing an arm about my neck, while she laid her hand upon my breast, and tenderly fastened her blue eyes upon mine. "In your place, you may be sure, I should be jealous too. Why did you not resist?" she cried at last, sinking upon a chair and hiding her face in her hands. "Why did you not retreat while there was yet time?"

"There was none, Fanny, as you well know, not on the very day when, for the first time, I saw you pass before me."

She rose anew on hearing this speech and kissed me with mute transport. Moveless, dreaming, I resigned myself to it.

At last I said:

"Love, Fanny, may console many pangs, obliterate many humiliations, replace many affections. Tell me, what are the world's esteem and the peaceful feelings of family life to the absorption of one existence by another? Is life so long that we can consent to sacrifice it to so many trivialities? And, besides, what is the use? Who thanks us for it?"

"Roger! Roger!" she said, "what strange morality!"

But I went on:

"Do you not feel wearied of blushing, of trembling, of hiding yourself? Are you not at last ashamed of shame? And is not your heart stirred to rebellion by the waiting, the waiting still and waiting ever, to bring me the greedy kisses for which my lips are hungering? What! In the whole space of a year we succeed with much difficulty in spending a hundred hours together, and is this the happiness with which we are to be contented? And if this happiness were even pure, unmixed, absolute! But you cannot listen to me without

growing pale at the recollection of your anxieties, of the dangers that you incur, of my own torments; while I, unhappy man that I am! I cannot once kiss you that a spectre does not immediately—"

"I beseech you," she cried, abruptly, "if you love me, do not tell me that you are unhappy, for that would kill me."

"Yet," I continued, looking at her with a softened expression, "if you were but willing, in the world there would be no existence comparable to ours. What I ask of you is the power of at last charging myself with the task of making your life a peaceful one; the power of being alone in my occupation about you, in preparing and smoothing beneath your feet the path of the future; the power of being alone in my love for you. My desire is to become the means and the end of your happiness; to take for myself all your troubles, and to give you in exchange all my dreams, my pleasures, my delights. 'Tis to be at once your child, your lover and your father, blending upon your dear head the sweetest and surest affections. 'Tis to concentrate upon you, as well the recollections of the past as the felicities of the present and the prayers for the future, so that you may at last become all in all to me, and there may remain in my life nothing that is not inspired by you, that does not flow from you, that is not your very self! If you were but willing!

"Are there not lands where those whom fate has separated and love has brought together, may at last taste in freedom of that especial rest which results from fulness of bliss, and which is life? Often, in my dreams, I fancy that we are voluntary exiles in the immensity of some solitude where, beneath a sky that is always blue, in the shadow of trees that are always green, on the shore of a sea that is always still, on carpets of moss that are always in bloom, we enjoy each other, as though our dual existence had ceased to be more than a palpable recollection. What evil fortune could strike us there? What disquiet move us? What suspicion reach us? What

jealousy sadden us in the felicity of days that were ever the same? If you were but willing!

"Would it be nothing to me to embrace you unceasingly like a gentle, coaxing child; to seek unceasingly to meet the softened look of your blue eyes beneath their lids; to listen long to the play of your breath between your lips; to sleep with my mouth clinging to your shoulder, and my hand laid in yours; to see you every day moving, going, coming before me, fairer, calmer, more graceful, than a young girl's dream? Listen further: Would it be nothing to you to think that you had sacrificed to me all the prejudices which deck a woman's heart; that you had drawn me forth from the abyss of sorrow in the depths of which I have so long been struggling; and that, finally, you had, of yourself alone, given me more happiness than any man here below could desire? Ah! Fanny! never again would I weeping say: 'I love you!' if you were but willing!"

Fanny hung upon my lips. Intoxicated with pleasure, she drank in my words. With her head

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sunk upon her shoulder, her arms hanging down, and her eyelids drooping, she listened to them as to distant music of which nothing must be lost, whelmed in deep dreaming, that blended every sensation and every grief. Her pink nostrils dilated, her mouth murmured sweet, unintelligible replies; a gentle trembling imparted movement to her hands, and caused rapid quiverings to traverse her skin. At last, unable to bear it any longer, she rose, and sank upon my heart. There I could feel her tears flowing amid her kisses upon my neck. Ah! what a sweet embrace!

"Let us never speak of that!" she said at last, with an expression of despair, raising her face, and pressing my forehead with her hand. "It hurts me too much. Dear Roger, the sacrifice which you desire to make is equal to that which you ask from me. The happiness painted by your persuasive lips is the fairest dream that could ever enchant me; but, alas, it is only a dream. Oh, Roger! let us love, let us worship each other, but in pity speak to me thus no more!"

### CHAPTER XXXV.

I DID not consider myself vanquished by this cry of despair, which revealed to me so many ardent aspirations and hidden griefs. We had neither of us, in this loving discussion, employed our real arguments. Partially satisfied with having placed the supreme question of my life before her who was to solve it, I determined to allow her to reflect, that she might become accustomed to it. I waited for a more favourable opportunity to recommence the struggle and despatch my worshipped foe. It was not long in offering itself. It was terrible, unforeseen, and left me no alternative but either to overcome the last scruples of my mistress or else to lose her for ever.

# CHAPTER XXXVI.

ONE day Fanny appeared to me to be pre-occupied in manner. She spoke quickly and much on trivial topics, as though she wished to stifle some matter of too grave concern. I abstained from questioning her, and did not seem to perceive her disquiet. Her caresses were eager, and so, too, were mine, but our spirits and our wills had no share in them. There came a moment when we both felt that we had exhausted idle speech. Her head was thrown back over my arm, and, bending over her face, I was gazing upon it with mute anxiety. Her stifled respiration rose to her lips in lengthened sighs; her eyelids drooped before my questioning looks; she kept her eyes turned away, and was blushing.

I took her hand without speaking a word. She pressed it with feverish energy.

"Speak, in the name of heaven," I cried.

I felt that I was pale. Suddenly throwing herself with her face upon my breast, she strained me convulsively in her arms.

Obscured by a thousand confused concealments, the cruel story issued at last from her lips. But, at the first word that she uttered, I understood all. That very morning her husband had given her to understand in a most communicative letter that he would probably be obliged to settle in England for several years.

"In this case," he added, "she must send her elder children to school, and come to join him immediately with the younger."

I was overwhelmed. I was indignant with Fanny for the courage which she had at last found for uttering the abominable words of separation. But I concealed the agonies that were rending my heart, and suffered her to see in my face nothing but the traces of profound grief. Seizing her in my arms, I cried:

- "It shall not be, I swear it! To separate me from you would be to tear my heart out."
- "What can we do?" she said, wringing her hands.
- "Love each other," I replied, with exaltation; "love each other with all our strength, and find a resource in horrible necessity."
  - "A resource?" she said.

But I interrupted her.

"Fanny, this is a solemn moment; it is no longer a question of fine-drawn worldly considerations, and jealousies of the past; it is a question of life or death. Before God I pledge you my life. Will you give me yours?"

She threw herself into my arms, saying again:

- "What can we do?"
- "Fly together so far that no one shall ever find us again."

### CHAPTER XXXVII.

At this speech we became silent. Fanny released herself slowly from my arms, laid both her hands upon my shoulders, and looked at me.

I cast down my eyes now, fearing her anger. But how little I knew her! She had nothing but pity to show me. Cruelly divided between her love and the duty which pointed to her proper position beside the head of the family, now struggling in exile to save his fortune, she displayed towards me more sorrow than a soul can contain without bursting. She knew that I must suffer terribly at the thought of a speedy termination to a union so dear; but she also understood that she could not refuse

obedience to the voice that was calling her. And she was loaded with ineffable grief in feeling that she was about to lose me, and that she was once more the cause of my sorrows.

"My children!" she cried at last, growing pale, with a heartrending expression.

"My poor children! So young! Do you think of them? You who are so good, you who love me, can you ask me to leave them!"

I knew at once, from the emotion that ravaged my heart, that all my attempts henceforth would be useless. In spite of my resistance, I felt a secret protest rising within me with cries of indignation. I myself had already ceased inwardly to desire such monstrous desertion of the children by their mother, or even, perhaps, such cowardly desertion of the unhappy husband by the woman that I loved.

But—shall I confess it?—it was not so much the wish to pass my life with Fanny that impelled me once more to the struggle; it was the settled idea of putting an end to that partition which I abhorred. Let a moment's frankness acquit me of the griefs that I caused! In urging Fanny anew, I felt that I suffered less from the certainty of losing her than from the idea that she was going to rejoin her husband. And with a horror of myself which was a fresh grief to be added to so many others, I said to myself:

"Now, I have more jealousy than love."

Meanwhile, with rather more tranquillity, but still with great sweetness, she had leaned upon her elbow, had turned towards me, and was debating all alone. I set myself again to listen to her.

"If I dared—if I did not dread to give you pain—"

"Speak! I am determined to hear all. Nothing to-day can make me more unhappy than I am."

Then came feverish caresses. At last, growing pale, she said:

"Well, I have not the horrible courage to ruin him. His only resource now is in my fortune—"

"What! is that all?" I exclaimed; "give

him up all that you have. Am I not rich enough for us both?"

But she shook her head.

"It is not that! It is not that!"

I looked at her; she was confused, and sought for vague words to disguise her thought. At last she continued in a low tone, as though she were reproaching herself for what she was going to say:

"How can I condemn him to solitude, especially at this moment when he is struggling for me as well as for himself. Never has he voluntarily caused me the slightest pain. In me he loves the companion of fifteen years of his life, the mother of his three children—"

"Why, then, did you deceive him?" I said to her, whelmed in wrath and sorrow.

But she crushed me with a single utterance:

"Because I loved you!"

And with a proud expression, which exalted her above herself, she added:

"It was not for you, Roger, to reproach me with my treachery."

Thus, all the thrusts which I dealt her were immediately followed by vigorous returns; but I could not weary of assailing her.

"And what if we were discovered!" I exclaimed, with the certainty that this last was difficult to parry.

She looked at me intently, as though she thought that I intended to denounce her, in order, perhaps, to possess her by this infamous means; she looked at me a long time and said:

"It would be very unfortunate."

I turned away my head; she despatched me:

"He would wring his hands and say: 'These children—'"

But I closed her lips, and looked with shuddering at her. Her countenance was covered with tears. In spite of my agitation I admired her impersonality, which she nobly extended to myself. She thought only of the victim!

"And what would he do?" I murmured.

Hiding her face in her hands, she replied in a muffled voice:

"He would, perhaps, forgive me."

"We are sufficiently punished," she added, sobbing, a little later. "If I submit to my duty I desert you; if I do not submit to it I am dishonoured. On all sides I see and cause nothing but misfortune. Unhappy through you, through him, through the thought of my children, through myself, I have not even the resource of death to restore peace to all. God! who gavest me a heart, was it not that I might comfort those I love, and must I, then, be unable to bury their griefs, like precious treasures, in this heart!"

Thus, in the twilight of the alcove, on the laces of the soft pillow, we wept, our arms entwined, and our heads close together— Who would have been willing to believe that for a very long time past our interviews had always been spent in this way?

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

From that fatal day I understood that I had nothing left to hope for from our love, and thenceforward we lived in the painful expectation of what another was to decide. But, as though fate had resolved not to spare us in any way, the solution, expected and dreaded every day, did not arrive. Letters no longer frightened her alone. It was I who wished for them, asked to know them, and framed ardent prayers for the success of the man who was not striving hard enough to please me. Nevertheless, in order to give the unhappy woman some courage, I exaggerated my confidence, and extolled in turns the well-known skilfulness, the firmness of disposition, and the strength of will of her husband. I declared that he would retrieve his fortune, that he would obtain justice, and that he would be restored to his well-earned repose! All my hopes rested now on him. I had ceased to think save of him; I was impassioned for him. Nay, the most unhoped-for happiness of which I had glimpses in my dreams was my rival's return, which would cast back the woman I worshipped into his arms!

"Why can I not assist him?" I would say to myself; "but of what use am I?"

And I now very bitterly regretted the idiotic reserve which had induced my refusal to cross the threshold of his house. If I had had less shy pride, if I had not desired to elevate myself by the singularity of an affected delicacy which did not, in my own eyes, cleanse me of my deed; if I had acted as so many others would have acted in my place, and become the friend of the man whom I was robbing of his wife; could I but have now redeemed the scanty redeemable share of my actions, I might have found some alleviation for my sorrows. But

I72 FANNY.

I had always had more pride than good sense, and I was now overwhelmed by the thought that through my own fault I found myself fit for nothing in the midst of a disaster wherein each one was doing his duty.

In setting these subtleties over against my conscience, I was not deceived by their slenderness. But as a drowning man will cling to floating grass without any hope of saving himself, I dwelt upon my own grief, I accused myself of errors that I had not committed, I misrepresented whatever was honourable in my feelings and conduct, because I was at my wits' end to recover a little hope.

# CHAPTER XXXIX.

FANNY used now to visit me as one visits an incurable patient, whom one is at each visit astonished to find still in existence. She could find nothing to say to me to give me courage; she had so great need of it herself. If the news were good she sighed; she wept when it was bad.

One day when she had unfolded in all its terrible length before me the weighty chain of the most secret miseries which, in terror at feeling herself too weak to support them, she could foresee, I suddenly broke silence, and made a simple offer of my entire fortune to extricate her husband's honour which, a last and horrible stake, had just been thrown upon the green cloth of chance.

But even in presence of this fresh disaster superposed upon the former one, and so crushing as to make it disappear, she still continued what it was her duty to be.

"It is a misfortune belonging to our situation," she said, with extraordinary severity. "Oh, Roger, more than ever do I adore you, but I am not free, and it is because I adore you that you are the only man from whom I can accept nothing."

## CHAPTER XL.

FATE ceased at last to strike her. One after the other, the letters now became more and more reassuring, and already it was no longer a question of honour, or poverty, or even of the separation which we had so greatly dreaded. At most, it was only the loss of half her fortune that might occasion Fanny anxiety. Then she again became calm and smiling; but I, like a wretch with two wounds to dress, I could immediately feel my jealousy awake more ardent than ever. Fanny's husband would soon come back, and his return, formerly so greatly desired, I was unable to contemplate save with horror. I longed for his death. I again became gloomy, suspicious, interrogatory; and our contests began once more.

### CHAPTER XLI.

The thought of breaking with my mistress had hitherto never occurred to me, but, gleaming like a lightning-flash, it suddenly appeared to me now. And with it I could feel gliding into my heart the sweet caress of hope. This hope, however, lasted no longer than a second. In spite of myself, and with quiverings of horror, I hastened to drive the plan of self-enfranchisement away.

# CHAPTER XLII.

One day, after a discussion, during which I had once more laid bare my new agonies before her eyes, Fanny herself anticipated a thought which I had never dare to reveal to her.

"I have been wanting in cleverness," she said to me; "I ought to have disguised my whole life from you. No matter how improbable the things I said to you might have been, you would have believed them because you would have been interested in doing so. I have been wanting in cleverness," she repeated; "but I never was able to lie."

This confession came upon me like a sudden revelation. I immediately conjectured that, equally with so many other women, she prided

herself upon her felicity, had the vanity to conceal her sorrows as if they were vices, and, although miserable, wished to be believed happy. This suspicion disquieted me for a week; but the hope which it had restored to my heart could not live. I adjured Fanny to conceal nothing of her life from me, and gave her opportunities of contradicting herself. With a surprise, which appeared to me very real, she coldly confirmed her words, and gave me back my despair.

# CHAPTER XLIII.

MEANWHILE the time appointed by her husband for his return was drawing near. It seemed to me that this must be the day of our rupture and of my death. The thought of partition now inspired me with insurmountable disgust. A hundred times did I resolve to come to an understanding with Fanny on this horrible subject, but I dared not.

She appeared to have actually received a new life; she was more tender and more submissive than ever. Simultaneously she became more expansive; and as, during these later days, we had talked of a thousand things that concerned her, she imprudently continued to converse with me upon the slightest incidents in her life.

It was this which was one day again to set us facing each other in the threatening attitude of foes.

I do not know how it came about, or which of us was the cause of the cruel scene that was to follow, but I recollect that Fanny was on the point of leaving me, and that we were both standing. She had just fastened the strings of her bonnet in front of the mirror over the mantel-piece, against which I was leaning; her shoulders were wrapped in her shawl, and she was finishing the buttoning of her gloves, glancing about the while in search of her handkerchief, which she had laid upon a table. We were continuing in semi-affectionate and familiar terms a discussion which had been begun concerning herself and her husband; both of us were calm, when she chanced to utter a speech which froze the blood in my veins.

"I should speak falsely," she murmured, "were I to say that I have no affection for him."

She had no sooner reflected upon the cruelty of these words, which were the more imprudent that they were unnecessary, than she repented of having uttered them. She came up to me without adding anything more or without contradicting them, threw aside her shawl in order to put her arm around my neck, patted me on the cheek with the hand that was free, and raised herself on tiptoe to kiss me. Her eyes were soft, and asked forgiveness for the cruelty of her lips.

"You women," I said bitterly to her, slowly obliging her to release herself from my breast, have no delicacy of heart."

She blushed, became gentler and more insinuating still, and came closer in order to try once more to kiss me.

But I stretched out my arm, and keeping her at a distance with my hand laid upon her shoulder, I said to her in a low voice that trembled with passion:

"For the last few days you have been speaking too much of your husband; you have been boasting too much of him. Did you forget that now it is no longer he who is to be pitied?"

She took my hand and pressed it warmly,

while with closed lips, and not knowing what to say, she gazed at me with beseeching tenderness.

But my anger was heightened in proportion as I saw her emphasize her repentance, and I went on:

"You do all the better to love him, seeing that above all others he deserves your esteem."

Then she perceived that she would not succeed in calming me. Not knowing what to do, she made no retort to this ambiguous speech, quietly unfastened her bonnet strings, laid bonnet and shawl on the bed, and sat down in an easy chair in front of me. With her left elbow resting on the arm of the chair, her cheek propped in the hollow of her hand, her gaze hovering in front of her, she continued there in her habitual attitude.

More beautiful than ever, with her wonderful arms whose down-shaded whiteness stood out against her black silk dress, her long Swede gloves ascending above her wrists, her flexile and curving neck, her dull complexion, and her fair hair curling playfully above her pure brow, she was like some beautiful portrait by Rubens. Her little feet, which were brought close together and set flat upon the ground, peeped out beneath the hem of her dress. Her right arm, extended across her person, was sunk in the dark folds of the silk, and her half-closed hand lay motionless like a hand of marble.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

When her husband's calamity became known to the public, I learnt that reports were current in Paris dishonouring to him. He was wealthy and proud, and so had many enemies. Such reports must have been libellous, for they issued only from envious lips. From motives of prudence, I did not contradict them, but I collected them. I little suspected, nevertheless, that I should one day make use of them in order to take my revenge.

Exasperated with passion, I waited until a word, provoking me anew, should serve as an excuse for my cruelty. But she was chary of speaking, conjecturing that I would interpret anything she might say in the direction of my

wrath. Thus we accordingly remained—she awaiting the finishing blow, and I gathering all my strength to strike.

At last I took my resolve, and in a single phrase, sharp as a sword and assailing my rival's honour in its most sacred point, I repeated the infamies which I did not believe. The return was quick and terrible.

"'Tis ill done!" she cried, rising, beside herself, with purpled cheeks, and with an expression of anger and abhorrence that astounded me. "I will not have the honour of the head of the house assailed! I will not have the man whose name I bear dishonoured! And it is just because I have deceived him, because I have stained that portion of his honour which he had entrusted to me, that I will suffer no one to touch the rest—you least of all!"

"You should blush!" she cried, a little later.
"Even though you believed these libels you ought
to defend him to me—since it was with
me—"

She broke off. I remained dumb; she went on again:

"You speak of the indelicacy of women's hearts; I will speak of the pride of men. not only women's love that you must have to make a litter beneath your feet; it is all that they cherish, all that they respect: the world's esteem, their family, their children, the tranquillity and the very honour of their husbands. You must have everything in order to break it, and turn it into ridicule. Oh, I am well punished for believing that I could love you with impunity. I have been prudent, and so it is not my outraged husband that chastises my guilt, but-a thousand times more cruel a chastisement !—it is my love. I deserve my penalty, and it is you who are punishing me!"

I still remained dumb; she went on in this way, her mouth filled with sarcasms:

"You are like all the rest! You have only pride! You do not know how to love!"

This time I replied with agitation:

"Is it not excusable in me to attack him?"

"Then attack him like a man!" she cried;
"you who have so many reasons for loving him!"
"By heaven! I will do so!"

And with this, exasperated in my turn, my eyes bloodshot and my teeth clenched, I advanced towards her; but she stopped three paces off, with an icy look such as I had never seen in her eyes before. Then, slowly wrapping herself in her shawl from head to foot like some priestess of antiquity, dark, wild, despairing, she cast upon me another look of contempt, and disappeared.

### CHAPTER XLV.

"What was to be done to soothe her?"

Such was the craven question which I proposed to myself on awaking the following morning. And I wrote her a long letter, so submissive that I was unable to read it over without shame. I tore it up and began another; but its manner was so harsh that it must inevitably exasperate the woman I wished to move. I did not finish this letter, and spent an hour in pacing my room to and fro, and wringing my hands. My thoughts of instant rupture awoke again, and then were lulled. My frenzy was re-kindled with my jealousy; then died away. I saw at last that the act to which I had wished to impel Fanny, was a crime that, while irreme-

diably consummating the misfortune of an entire family, must have rendered us unhappy for It terrified me to think that, had she listened to me, the images of her deserted children would throughout our whole existence have interposed between herself and me. But, at the same time, I was not strong enough to release myself. I had grown accustomed to my pains; I dared not barter them for others that were unknown. No one who has not been, as I was, the object of affection and tenderness, who has not been the heart which unceasingly ordered the impulses of another; can picture the horrors of the solitude that follows a separation. I was delirious with grief and rage. At last I was softened while gazing on my mistress's portrait.

"What has she done to me, after all?" I asked myself.

I shed a few tears, and, without coming to any decision, dressed and went out.

# CHAPTER XLVI.

It was, perhaps, eight o'clock. The warmth of the latter days of the month of August purpled the heavy sky. The shadows came down like scattered shrouds with the thick mist through the trees in the main avenue of the Champs-Elysées. The passers-by hastened in order to escape the storm which was muttering in the distance. The gleaming stars in the lamps here and there, danced about, crossed one another and disappeared. Clouds of dust raised by the wind ascended before me and masked space. Midway I stopped, almost between the Rond-Point and the Arc-de-Triomphe.

There it was. I leaned against a tree, raised my head and looked. At my feet descended the

carriage-way which led from the principal entrance to the avenue. Above the entrance were the four half-opened windows of the drawing room. A single lamp, without doubt, illuminated the room, for the light which crept into the window panes shone scantily and with dubious clearness. No shadow passed between the lamp and the panes.

"The house is empty," I said to myself, "and yet Fanny is not at Chaville, since the drawing-room is lit up."

At this moment the storm growled more loudly. The lightning flashed. A gust of wind roared through the foliage of the elms in the avenue, raising whirls of leaves and sand. Then I saw the shadow of a man come forward behind the first window to my left, and close it. A little later he closed the three others. Then the feeble light which illuminated the drawing-room struck redder and brighter upon the panes; a second lamp had been lit.

After that there was nothing more. The deserted avenue, the storm in the black-grown

sky, myself standing beneath my tree, and the empty drawing-room with its four flaming windows. Eleven sounded from the clock of a neighbouring church.

Suddenly, the grinding of rapid wheels biting the gravel sounded beside me. I had taken a few steps at random, without knowing why.

"Hi! hi!" cried an angry voice.

I flung to the side of the carriage way. An empty brougham passed first, yielding and springing on its axletrees in consequence of the shock; then a large travelling berlin drawn by four posthorses wheeled round abruptly, while the two portions of the entrance gate were thrown back right and left from the inside.

I cast a startled glance into the berlin. A man was leaning back within it; it was he, I recognised him. By his side a woman talking to him; it was she. Mingled with them, on their knees or in their arms, were three fair-haired children. It was a rapid vision. I do not know whether they perceived me; the berlin was now engulfed beneath the yawning arch of the gateway, and the

two heavy portions of the gate were already revolving on their hinges. They rang, as they fell into their places, with a lugubrious, cavernous sound. I had just stood aside to afford a passage to my rival, who, in his capacity of master, was re-entering his house.

#### CHAPTER XLVII.

"Why did he not crush me beneath his wheels!" I cried, with death in my soul, as I moved away, walking at random like a drunken man.

A hackney coach was passing; I flung myself into it.

"Where to?" said the driver, wrapping himself up in his cloak.

"Wherever you like. To the Bois. Wherever you will."

And I suddenly felt myself carried far away from the fatal spot.

The rain soon streamed down the raised windows. Crouching in a corner of the vehicle, with arms folded, and cheek resting against the panel-cloth, I could see in the lightning flashes the dishevelling of the trees as they were

tortured by the squalls. From time to time bursts of thunder reverberated through the air.

"Will not this storm terrify them!" I exclaimed.

I have forgotten how long a time I spent blaspheming, and tearing my breast with my nails, and weeping, shut up in this rolling box as it passed quickly through the trees of the wood amid the purpled gleaming of the lightning. I let down the windows, and the rain fell in sheets upon my face and hands. I leaned for awhile on the ledge of the window, my face resting on my arms. A horrible, cold sensation seized me. I was in a fever.

"Do you wish to return home?" the driver said to me from time to time, wearied by such a journey.

"Home!" I said, at last, being myself wearied. He slackened the speed of his horse, the vehicle turned round, and began to roll on again.

#### CHAPTER XLVIII.

DAY was breaking tearfully in an ill-dried sky, when, raising my head, I recognised a house by the roadside. It was hers. All the shutters were closed, and the lights extinguished. Only an extremely feeble light, like that shed through the apertures of a night lamp, shone like a red speck between the laths of a venetian blind on the last window to the right, a window that was next to the drawing-room. I leaned for a long time over the carriage door in order to look at this dying speck. But I was no longer weeping; I was calm, icy, whelmed in fatigue.

"Is she sleeping now, at last?" I asked myself, as I moved away.

# CHAPTER XLIX.

I SPENT the days immediately following this horrible night in a state of dejection, from which nothing could draw me. I was waiting for something or other that would terminate my life and my griefs.

"Nevertheless, it cannot end thus!" I would say to myself.

Twenty times a day I rang to ask for my letters; but I did not so much as open those which my servant brought me. I did no more than look at the handwriting of the addresses. Nothing came to me from Fanny. It seemed to me that she was dead. I was afraid. I mistrusted my reason.

On the eighth day after our last interview I had something like a presentiment that I was going to see her. I prepared everything that I wished

to say to her. Alas! I felt that I was conquered; I wanted to ask for forgiveness; I wanted to declare that I was ready to submit; I wanted to beseech her to show a little pity to my griefs. But I waited in vain until nightfall, counting the hours by the alternately hurried and slackened pulsations in my wrist. She did not come. She did not write. No one afforded me an instant's hope by ringing the bell at my door.

When night had fallen, I took my way to her house. On arriving in front of it, in the avenue, I perceived to my great surprise that all the shutters were closed. The thought that Fanny has gone far away, so far that I could never find her again, pierced my brain like an arrow. With horrible anguish, but resolutely, like a coward who has taken it into his head to give proof of his courage, I lifted the knocker and asked the servant who came to the door whether she were at home. I was white and trembling, but he did not perceive it.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Madame is in the country," he replied.

<sup>&</sup>quot;And where? At Chaville?"

"Yes, sir."

I went to a tree and leaned against it, for I felt faint.

After a few minutes, I resolved to return home. It partially consoled me to know that Fanny was away. I understood at last the motive which had prevented her from coming; but I did not understand why, for a week, she had not written to me. I might have reflected that she too was hoping for a letter from me; but there was still too much personal feeling in my ill-will.

"Perhaps she is expecting me over there," I said to myself by way of comfort.

This thought had no sooner entered my mind than an imperious desire to see Fanny again immediately, and at all costs, took possession of me. I was then a few steps from my own door. I went in and called for my horse. I assisted the stableman to saddle him. And I dashed into the street filled with hope, pressing my knees close, shaking the reins, going at full trot, riding down foot-passengers without a word of warning.

I went with such speed that on arriving I feared

I had missed my way, and did not recognise Fanny's house when it reared itself before me, dimly lighted beneath the great trees. But on rising in my stirrups to look over the wall, I perceived the summer-house. Then I dismounted, and made my way into the wood to fasten my horse to a branch. Next I retraced my steps and saw with surprise that the park gate was wide open. A man in livery was stationed beside it. At the end of the avenue I could see the gleaming of two lamps in a carriage standing at a corner of the house. Half-way between the house and the gate, in the midst of an extensive lawn somewhat to the left, the stained glass windows of the summer-house showed brilliant in the rays from a lamp within.

"What is the meaning of all this?" I asked myself as I walked along the walls to find the breach by which I had entered twice before.

But I had scarcely set foot in the park when I stood riveted to the spot. I had caught the sound of curses and sobs. They came from the summer house, twenty paces off. A cold sweat covered

my entire body. I shook like the leaves of the shrubs under which I crouched.

At that moment, the carriage which was in waiting, started, and proceeded rapidly towards the gate, the coachman doubtless obeying a call which I had not heard. On arriving in front of me, it stopped, and the footman opened the. door. The cries and sobs had ceased. A man came out of the summer-house, closing the door behind him. I recognised him. Moreover, who else could it have been? He settled himself on the cushions, the servant mounted the box, the coachman touched up the horses, the brougham started on again, passed through the gate, and rolled along the echoing road, while the gate was closed by the man in livery standing beside it.

As soon as this man was lost among the trees on his way back to the house, I advanced abruptly and without precaution. But before turning the handle of the door, I looked through the window. In the centre of the summer house stood a round table supporting a lamp. A broad

divan ran all round; and lying back on this divan, her face in her hands, weeping and sobbing as though her heart would break, was a woman. It was she! Fanny! I went in quickly, stretched out my arms, and fell upon my knees at her feet.

She had no sooner recognised me than she uttered a heart-rending cry, clasped my head in her arms, and stifled me against her breast. I could neither speak nor breathe. She kissed my hair; she buried her face in it; she bit it to prevent herself from screaming; then she raised my head, and I could feel her tears moistening my cheeks, while her quivering lips trembled upon mine, and her hands throbbed as they wandered over my shoulders, my neck and my head. Finally she threw herself back with me, and, crushed with sorrow, spread out her arms and fainted.

Then I rose. I was wholly unable to understand the departure of the husband and the tears of the wife. Nevertheless, I did all in my power to recall her to life. The lamp had

fallen and gone out. Groping my way towards Fanny, I tore away the fastenings of her dress, and removed her bodice by fragments. Then by dint of endearments, entreaties, and prayers; by clasping her hands in mine and warming her with my breath, I at last succeeded in reviving her. She suddenly heaved a long sigh, and lifted herself up in my arms; then she appeared to reflect. And torrents of tears gushed at last from her eyes, and she threw herself upon me with such self-abandonment, and with such a manifestation of pain, that I could not refrain from weeping as I kissed her.

"Oh! Roger! my Roger!" she cried at last in a broken voice, "if you knew how unhappy I am! Comfort me. Love me. Help me. Oh! what good it does me to weep on your heart. My dear Roger!"

Sobs choked her utterance. I urged her to explain herself. I was as yet quite unable to understand a grief through which there broke like lightning-gleams cries of abhorrence and indignation.

"Does your husband know all?" I said to her. She shook her head.

"No, it is not that; but I have lied to you for a year; I am the most unhappy, the most humiliated, the most insulted of women. Outcasts, unfortunates, the most degraded of women are not lower than I."

To this cry issuing at last from her lips, I knew not at first what to rejoin. I was stupid with surprise. Fury shattered my limbs. I could find nothing to say. I could only go away, come back again, and convulsively kiss my weeping mistress. Suddenly a ray of luminous foresight furrowed my mind.

"If I do not take advantage of this opportunity to make her confess," I said to myself, "I shall never know anything. Once quieted, she will say nothing."

The thought was a just one. I did well in hearkening to its prompting. I accordingly put forth all my eloquence, to draw from the poor woman the secret which she had so long concealed so successfully from me. I urged her,

I encouraged her, I questioned her, while compassionating her sorrow. Then I learnt a heart-breaking history, not all at once, but in fragments, by extorting the smallest details from her; for in spite of her excitement, she was from time to time reticent in the more delicate portions of her narrative.

Then she made clear to me all that had hitherto been obscure in her life and conduct.

#### CHAPTER L.

HER husband was not the contemptuously kind-hearted man that I had imagined. He was a terrible despot. Wife, children, friends, servants, all bent instinctively to his humour, and submitted passively to the exactions of his disposition. It was not from jealousy that he oppressed his wife; it was in order to satisfy an ungovernable spirit of will. In his house there was but one person who should take the lead, and upon whom all the others must ingeniously be modelled. He was, in fact, in his own estimation, not a man, but a kind of sun that gave out light and heat, and imparted life to all surrounding him.

Thus, when he saw his wife, by my advice deviating insensibly from the line of conduct which he had marked out for her, he had first experienced a feeling of great stupefaction.

But, with a knitting of his eyebrows, he immediately brought her into order again Nevertheless, he did not seek to fathom the reason of her timid attempt at enfranchisement. In his eyes every woman was a fantastic creature, influenced by incomprehensible springs of action, and not by any possibility to be taken seriously. Evidently, he had not carried off Fanny nor married her for love. No. He had coveted her because she was beautiful, and he desired that a beautiful woman should do the honours of his house. He had carried her off because she was denied him. He had married her because she was rich, and because, moreover, he wished not only to enrich himself, but to be the founder of a family.

But, finding her submissive, he was full of consideration. He made a point of causing her to spend yearly twice the income which she had brought him as dowry, and he even frequently made her handsome presents, in order to display his magnificence. In a word, he showed her something of that rude attention which the Arab

horsemen pay to their thoroughbreds. They tend them personally with one hand, while in the other they hold the whip which will chastise the slightest attempt to shy.

For a long time Fanny was dominated by this superior will, and passively submitted. She thought through him, acted through him, lived for him. At last her resignation obtained from her master a semblance of freedom. Some young fellows, so I understood, took advantage of this to pay open and very assiduous addresses to this charming woman, whose air of tranquillity revealed such a lengthened habituation to inward revolt and undisclosed sorrows. But her husband did not even suspect it. Chance alone caused a compromising letter to fall into his hands. The scene which followed the discovery was a terrible one. Yet there were no elevations of the voice, no insults nor degrading brutalities: so, likewise, there was no duel, no explanation, no forced separation of the two imprudent parties—things which, while taking vengeance for the husband's pride, would have irremissibly

chastised it. Only, the intelligent husband kept the letter. And from that time, whenever he came across the smallest desire for enfranchisement on the part of his wife, he employed this letter to make her quiver and submit. In his hands a scrap of paper became a knife, with which he goaded his wife to make her walk on before him.

Was the man, then, altogether vile? he was simply very proud. Had this precious letter been a thousand times more explicit, he would not have believed it. In his eyes it was nothing but the proof of a piece of childishness, a proof which, skilfully managed, might disguise the childishness with the semblance of a crime. But he never believed in the crime. For how could he have believed in it? It was not possible, for the sole reason that his wife could not manifest herself criminal towards him. cause she was his wife. Because he was himself. Thus, while he raged somewhat at the humiliating childishness, he showed himself neither anxious nor unhappy. And with all his iron

heart, he again set himself, after his own fashion, to love his wife. Nay, after fifteen years of marriage, there were still many days on which he acted towards her like a lover.

But the weapon remained a weapon in his hands, and he made use of it. Thanks to it, he first of all obtained from Fanny that she would cease to see her mother, whom he detested, because she had not, of her own freewill, desired to accept him as a son-in-law. Afterwards he required that she should have her children nursed by a stranger, under pretence that the cares of maternity would cause her to lose her taste for the pleasures of society; then, without consulting her, and to serve no obvious purpose, he sold the château in which she had been born and had passed her youth, with its surrounding park, wherein were buried her father and her two brothers. In short, thanks to this most fortunate letter, there were no constraints which he did not impose upon her, no vexations which he did not cause her to endure, yet without unkindness, and always loading her the while with attentions! Especially before the world! And Fanny's life became a hell, in which a pitiless demon tortured her with one hand while caressing her with the other.

It was above all when Fanny resisted, when what he required of her became too serious, and conflicted too brutally with her delicacy or her pride, that he indulged in unparalleled transports. Then—but for an hour only—he lost all control over himself. He was no longer the politely disdainful man who bore in his countenance the most exquisite shades of superiority of character, and whose affable, open demeanour seemed to say to everyone: "See how little I am to be feared." He once more became the lion that nature had moulded with her callous hands, and that education had scarcely refined. His hair stood upright on his forehead, like a mane. His eyes flamed with gleamings as of molten gold. His dilated nostrils breathed forth a hot breath. His contracted mouth parted, and displayed admirable teeth, as though he wished to bite. His fists became clenched. He was terrible. And above

all there was an insult with which he never failed to strike his victim. The letter provided him with the pretext for it; and it was always the same insult—the same infamous expression which branded her brow like a red-hot iron, and which degraded her as she said to the lowest rank of all women.

But Fate, which makes no compromise with passions and temperaments, sometimes set itself to wrestle with this athlete. Unforseen events struck him; unheard of obstacles sprung up beneath his feet. It was then that he was great! He did not blaspheme, he did not revile Fate. for he knew that it was useless; but he closed with the events and the obstacles, and silently. coldly, patiently wrestled with them. He prevailed over Fate as a rule. When his fortune was compromised he succeeded by his daring in recovering possession of the greater part of it, abandoning the rest, as a sort of derisive favour. to his creditors and rivals. Any other man would have failed in his place, for none other could have exercised the same will-power as he did. But a

half-success was not enough for a man insatiable for brilliant successes. He had resolved that he would have his vessel off the reefs on which it had just been driven. He wanted to save everything, freight and rigging, and the very ballast. He had sworn that he would not spare to Ocean a single nail. And now, recovered from his earlier efforts by a week of reflection, he was setting off anew to take up his post on the scene of the shipwreck, more eager, more resolved than at first. And it was this sudden departure which had caused the ignoble dispute at which I had involuntarily been present.

### CHAPTER LI.

IT seems that at dinner he had in a few words announced his plans to his wife. He was calm. reflective, almost affectionate. He bantered Fanny on her look of sadness, which was caused. he thought, by their absurd life in the country. He played with his children. He was polite, as he always was, to the servants who waited on him. At dessert he rose, asked for a cigar, lit it, and proceeded towards the summer-house—holding Fanny under the arm and uttering trifles to her with an air of amiability. As the children were running across the lawn after them, he went up to them, kissed them, bade them goodbye, and affectionately requested them to go and play farther off. Then he sat down on the divan in the summer house, the door of which was open, finishing his cigar and sipping his coffee. At nightfall a servant brought a lamp. He asked him to have his brougham got ready. Up to this point he had spoken of nothing but trifles, in an off-hand fashion. But when the servant was gone, he rose to close the door, quietly drew a stamped paper from his pocket, and said to his wife:

"My dear, be so good as to place your signature here, beside mine, at the foot of this sheet."

Fanny took the pen, which he held out to her; but before writing, she said to him:

"And what is this mysterious paper I am going to sign?"

"Simply a reciprocal deed of donation of all our property," he replied.

Then Fanny laid the pen on the table, and gently asked him for some explanations of the use which he intended to make of it. He knitted his brows and announced to her that for some time he was about "to engage in business again, and that he needed a great deal of money."

"Are we not rich enough, then?" she said.

- "Why-no."
- "Do you intend to risk my fortune?"

At this speech he looked her in the face, and replied coldly, as though in defiance:

- "Yes."
- "Then I shall not sign this deed," she said, growing pale at her own courage; "for I will not risk the property of our children."

It was when she said this that the storm broke. On encountering an unexpected obstacle before him, the despot bellowed with passion. For the first time in his life he grasped his wife's arm, squeezed it to make her sign, and bruised it. She endured this brutality, without reply or tears. Then gathering hurriedly from his memory all his past grievances, he loaded her with contempt. with recriminations, with abuse. And as a supreme insult, the same word burst at last from his lips. It was then that Fanny wept, and sobbed, and resolved to sign the deed. He immediately became calm, thanked her, and tried to take her hand to kiss it; but, showing him her bruised arm, she said to him:

"It is not for that, God is my witness, that I despise you, 'tis for the cowardice of your insult."

Thereupon he asked her forgiveness from his lips outwards, called her a child and a wrong-headed creature, kissed her in spite of herself, summoned his coachman, and departed.

#### CHAPTER LII.

When Fanny, yielding to my solicitations, had informed me of these extraordinary events—not in the order which I have observed, but in incoherent fragments, mingled with cries of indignation—when I had nothing left to ask her, and she remained silent, having nothing left to tell me, we remained for some time looking in silence and with dull dread at each other, by the dim light of the stars. Something formidable had just risen between us which strangely modified our situation.

Nevertheless, I could not forthwith apply myself to the pursuit of the facts which must necessarily flow from this surprising confession. Seeing Fanny still pale, with disordered hair and trembling hands, I could think only of her humiliation.

"How unhappy she is also!" I exclaimed to myself.

I drew her gently to me by the neck, I sought her lips, and I clasped her in my arms with the ardour of hope and pity.

Oh! how long, and close, and desperate was that embrace! Energetically did it wed our souls, and we then both felt that there was compassion in embraces and consolations in sighs, and were sensible of how greatly sympathy is strengthened by the blending of tears.

We were alone, silent, in darkness that was scantily softened by the pale glimmerings of a summer night. The disorder of my mistress's garments, the tearful weariness which held her lying in my arms, the shame at a confession which, while easing her heart, oppressed her pride for the first time; the happiness at finding ourselves more loving, more united than ever, after a violent discussion which might have parted us—all this inspired us with a certain

longing for mutual expansion which lacked neither bitterness nor sweetness. While my lips brushed her long dishevelled hair, my hand, laid upon her heart, discovered accelerations of movement which appeared to me to be secret expressions of wrath.

Repentance at having so long and so nobly defended against my attacks the man who was the tyrant of her life, wrung cries of implacable irony from her lips. Anger for the insult, and indignation at the undeserved humiliation, clasped her arms round my neck with more energy than had ever been lent to her by love, while regret at having caused unhappiness to the lover whose mere presence was then the tenderest of consolations, as it was the swiftest and surest form of vengeance, rendered her submissive and beseeching.

The recollection of my rival, which was present between us, imparted a desperate violence to our kisses, as well as an infinite sweetness to our caresses, and at this moment, at least, when, without speaking, we were interchanging so many sensations and so many quite intelligible ideas, Fanny at last was, in my thought, absolutely and for ever as indissolubly linked to me as she was separated from him.

### CHAPTER LIII.

When speech returned to us both, the passion brooding within me had a sudden outburst. I astounded Fanny. I uttered burning, incoherent words like a madman. A sort of insanity whetted like dagger-blades all the phrases that I uttered, while fury steeped them in the most corroding poisons.

The feeling of the impossibility of vengeance, the certainty that my mistress's sorrows must be unceasingly renewed, as well as all my own past jealousies, and, more than all beside, the remembrance of our deplorable discussions, of which this base man was the permanent cause, made me pant with wrath like a man who has just received a blow without being able to rend with his hands the person who has branded him with it.

In my frenzy it seemed to me that Fanny's love lost its value in proportion to the depth of her unhappiness, and blushing at this thought I dreamed of slaying, and of giving my life for her. But Fanny, in her present depression, preferred consolation to vengeance!

She took me in her arms again, and strange to tell, it was she who bestowed caresses upon me in order to soothe me.

## CHAPTER LIV.

I SPENT the following day in going over again to myself all that I had heard. For the first time during a very long period, I felt my mind relieved of doubt. A happy future unfolded itself before me after all the torment of the past, like peaceful valleys and plains to the eye of a traveller descending the precipitous slopes of dangerous mountains. The hope of a calm existence refreshed my soul, and I essayed to stretch myself at length beside the path which, easy once more, sank softly beneath my bruised feet. Serenity of days, absence of anxieties, this was what was now awaiting me, and I desisted not from so telling myself, while my soul transmitted bursts of gratitude to chance, which was at last refraining from assaults upon me.

Fanny's image necessarily mingled with this dream. She was the companion who had followed me across the abysses of passion. She, equally with myself, had suffered from the length of the way, from the uncertainty of the goal, from the hidden thorns upon which we thrust our feet together. The same sorrow had reddened our eyes, had heated our breath; simultaneously we had thirsted for repose. And as though it had been needful that the weaker of the two should suffer more than the other, Fanny, while encouraging me to resignation and with trembling hands wiping from my brow the acrid sweat of despair, had hidden from me private evils and fatigues which she bore nobly that they might not rob me of all hope.

But now these evils, which I had just discovered with her, were allayed. They could not for a long time be renewed. Delivered from the spectre which had so cruelly pursued us, we could, now that we were left to ourselves, at last take ample recompense for our torture and our terrors. Like two fugitives whose traces have

been lost, and who betake themselves to the brink of fountains and the shadows of silent woods to shake off the dust from their sandals, we were at last about to avenge ourselves on senseless Fate, by forgetting the torments with which it had overwhelmed us.

Thus I dreamed in the solitude of my home, looking at the sweet image of my dear mistress which smiled in my hands encircled by the aureola, as it were, of its golden frame. Thus I took pleasure in arranging the stages of our future before us.

Never had I fondled a more cruel illusion!

### CHAPTER LV.

THE first day on which I saw Fanny again was a magnificent one!

She came to me early in the morning, deliciously clad, as though worthily to celebrate the wedding of our happiness. A dress of mauve coloured silk, which harmonised sweetly with the freshness of her complexion, shimmered upon her delicate figure and fell gleaming to her feet. Her arms, which were partially uncovered, sprang from the laces on her sleeves, with dull reflections like those of unpolished ivory. So, too, her fair and somewhat curving neck, was to be seen issuing from her corsage, which was cut low upon the breast. Her hair hovered upon her cheeks.

Not a sound disturbed our speech, if it were not

the voice of the clock to which we did not listen, and, at distant intervals, the abrupt and transient rolling of vehicles, shaking the pavement of the street.

Once more we conversed in solitude. At table Fanny ate little, smiling as though to ask forgiveness. I rose to wait upon her and kissed her as I passed. She poured out for me gracefully and from a height, and my eyes followed the beautiful line of her arm which was lost in the shadowy breadth of her ample sleeve. Never had our room appeared so charming to us. It seemed to us that we were never to leave it.

She got up and seated herself on the edge of the divan. I placed myself on a cushion at her feet, with my elbow on her knees, and for a long time we continued to look at each other in this way without saying anything. One of her hands was sunk in my hair, and raised it and tossed it in clusters. I printed long kisses upon the other hand, which I held in my own.

"Ah! Fanny! if you were not married!" I said, passionately, to her.

She replied:

"Ah! Roger! if you were not jealous!"

I do not know how the day passed, but it passed very quickly! We looked at each other. We kissed each other. We went from one room to the other. She desired to know the history of my life. I told it to her; it was a very simple one. She shed tears as she listened to the story of my mother's death.

For the first time during a very long period we were calm and happy, and felt ourselves very near to each other. The fierce rancour of jealousy separated us no more. Our outpourings were unqualified; so, too, was the peacefulness of our souls. We had in our souls, without bending beneath it, such a burden of happiness as would have made the fortunes of ten lovers.

As I mentally compared this exquisite day with all those that had preceded it, I suddenly recollected the cause which had rendered us so unhappy for nearly a year. An exclamation of passion sprang from my lips, and while commiserating my mistress's long concealed

troubles, I could not refrain from branding the man who had occasioned them.

Then I was terrified to see Fanny biting her lips. A swift sensation passed across her face, like a silent lightning-flash furrowing a cloud. Then she again began to smile, and her brow became once more as calm as a fair evening sky. But I sought to unravel the cause of this painful sensation, and as a confused something rose at last in my memory, I grew sad and thoughtful again.

# CHAPTER LVI.

Fanny left me without appearing to suspect my uneasiness. When she was gone a thousand memories filled my mind in urgent waves like those of a troubled sea. Fanny's behaviour seemed to me more incomprehensible than ever.

"She must be either the oddest of all women or the vilest!"

And suddenly I reviewed swiftly in my memory all that I knew of her; but once more I encountered nothing but contradictions in her character.

Why defend my rival when I was ignorant of his violence? Why accuse him afterwards? And why now grow pale on hearing me brand the actions of the man who outrages her? Oh! can it be that a woman may endure such scorn,

such degrading vexations, and yet preserve the slightest affection for the man who tortures and humiliates her? Inexplicable enigma! Does she love? Does she love her husband? What relation can there be between this blending of natures, feelings, calculations, transactions, and love, that absolute, intolerant, exclusive passion?

Thus I ravelled, and unravelled, and collected all the facts of our common existence, without being able to disentangle the inextricable skein. Each in its turn boomed like a note in my ear and like a sinister clamour, resounding over all, there recurred ceaselessly that speech from Fanny's conscience which she had uttered one day, and which had tortured me, "I should speak falsely if I said that I have no affection for him."

### CHAPTER LVII.

From that time, involved again more closely than ever in the net of uncertainty, I felt but one desire, that of drawing the explanation of Fanny's character from her, no longer by questioning her, but by driving her to extremities. I, therefore, designedly assailed her husband in her presence, and it was very difficult for her to defend him, for it was only with reference to his violence that I assailed him.

At first she contented herself with remaining silent, raising her eyes towards heaven because I pitied her; then she appeared dissatisfied with the harshness of my expressions. Suddenly I saw her cheeks cover with a pink colour, her lips close and her eyelids droop, while

I exalted her resignation in order the better to depress the man who sported with it. At last she returned to what eternally occupied her:

"Let us speak no more of that," she said; "it is all frightful, but I am obliged to submit to it. He is my husband after all."

### CHAPTER LVIII.

This speech neither angered nor astounded me. I expected it. I smiled bitterly as I heard it come from my mistress's lips. She watched me pacing the room.

"'Tis the flight of a last illusion!" I exclaimed at last.

She questioned me as to the meaning of these words, but I refused to answer her.

"We have had only too many discussions for a year past," I said to her; "in my turn, I entreat you not to occupy yourself with what passes in me. Let us love each other for what we are. Despair or resistance will not change us."

#### CHAPTER LIX.

During her husband's absence, which lasted for more than six months, great changes were effected in our relations. I saw Fanny nearly every day. We both abused her freedon! She used to come and spend with me all the time at her own disposal. We often took our meals together. We used to meet afterwards, walking or at the theatre. We used to make appointments in shops. There, without appearing to know each other, we used to watch each other from the corners of our eyes, and, touch each other with our elbows, while we drove long bargains over stuffs or jewellery. And then we used to write each other interminable letters and send each other bouquets.

Fanny now overwhelmed me with attentions, as though to compensate me for the griefs which she had caused to me. She discovered to me those delicate kindnesses which women receive from men, and of which they are themselves so sparing, when they condescend to bestow them. She would kiss my hand, call me her child, show herself submissive, and watch to see that nothing disturbed the serenity of my life. But never did she seem to abase herself when treating me at last as a master. She had all a queen's dignity while kneeling before me.

Sometimes, when the fine autumn evenings were balmier and safer than those of summer, we made our escape from the town, like birds wearied with the heat of the day. Leaning back in a closed carriage, side by side and hand in hand, we used, without uttering a word, to visit the Bois, in quest of a little air, and silence, and solitude. Close to us passed the swift teams drawing into the night large open carriages filled with laughing women whose veils streamed in the wind. We listened to the crunching of the wheels

upon the sand, to the snorting of the horses, and the cracking of the whips. We watched the stars of the lanterns moving among the trees, or the dense shadows of the pine thickets admiring themselves in the stagnant water of the lakes. The moon, melancholy often as she hung like a silver spot in the heavens, illumined wide bushstrewn spaces where, skimming the grass, there rose veils of white vapour. Intoxicated by the scent of the oaks, by the softness of the luminous mists, we used to get out at the corner of some narrow path and bury ourselves beneath the arches of motionless trees, walking slowly, and more completely lost in our dreamings than was the green leafage in the shadow of the soft night. It was a delicious moment when Fanny hung on my arm as though she were tired, and pressed my shoulder against her own. We said nothing, we felt ourselves to be alive, we listened to our breathing, and as we were united, we discovered a strange calm sweetness in our silence, in the uncertainty of our steps.

Sometimes, however, slight discussions arose between us, attenuated reminiscences of our old dissensions. But taking me for what I was—a child—Fanny would laughingly seem not to hear my reproaches, or else, swinging up my arm with a mutinous air, would say:

"Come now, let us not speak any more about that, since it is past."

More and more was she penetrating my life on all its accessible sides. She was entering into it imperiously, desiring to know all, past and present, and arranging at her pleasure for the future. Her thought encumbered my own. She gave me counsels which I followed blindly as though they had been commands. She directed everything in my house. The furniture seemed to move of itself to take up the positions which she had indicated; the pictures changed panels; the mirrors inclined themselves at her wish in order to reflect everywhere her image. It was a great pleasure to me to see her thus arranging everything that belonged to me. My house had become hers, and seemed to have become feminine. The

tables no longer displayed spurs, or riding whips, or cigar boxes, nor the walls trophies of weapons; but there were boxes of flowers everywhere, white muslins trailing on the carpets, lacquered and buhl furniture, and cases of scent. Long needles and bits of silk or wool might be ricked up from the carpets, while thimble and scissors gleamed on the mantel-piece.

These six months were a sort of interval in the drama of my life. We lacked nothing that could make us happy, unless it were confidence. Fanny was always on her guard against a sudden attack, while I, on my part, cherished a certain feeling of animosity. I could not console myself for having failed to vanquish the scruples of the woman I loved.

I even reached such a stage of weakness that I sought her advice respecting the investment of my fortune. She knew nothing of business matters; but her opinions were sound, because they were always dictated by a spirit of feminine distrust. Did I not also bethink myself to consult her about the purchase of horses? As to

my dress, it was she who decided in sovereign fashion, concerning its shape and colour. It was she who, laughing and standing on tip-toe, herself arranged my linen along the shelves of the wardrobes, and interspersed it with sachets of a delicate and sweet odour which she bore about with her, and which I could never meet with elsewhere. At last, all the moments in my day were calculated. I never made a step without her approbation; I never bought a pair of gloves or a cravat without her advice. She determined the number of my friends. She made me neglect three whose names did not please her. All this I thought enchanting. She had bewitched me. I could no longer do without her.

# CHAPTER LX.

NEVERTHELESS my jealousy was not dead. It was not even killed; its object, merely, had been somewhat changed. Ever since the husband had been absent, it was impossible for me to be pained by a partition which had ceased to exist; but I was disturbed by the faintest feelings that Fanny suffered me to discern. Apart from her children and her mother whom she saw clandestinely, I allowed her to love nobody. She used to shrug her shoulders and laugh at it. Thus each tyrannized the other.

One day, when taking off the body of her dress, a large, square envelope—which had been handed to her just as she was leaving homeleaped out of her bosom and fell at my feet. I picked it up. It bore the London postmark. I looked at Fanny, who turned pale as she held out her hand to take it back.

- "Your husband writes to you, then?" I said, as I gave it to her.
  - "What a question!" she returned.
- "Does he write to you often?" I added after a moment's silence.
  - "Why-yes," she said; "every week."
- "Why does he write to you?" I went on, is since you parted after a dispute of such violence that it ought to separate your hearts for ever."

Fanny looked at me in astonishment and remained thoughtful. However, as I was waiting for a reply, she rejoined:

- "You are always astonished at the simplest things. Is it not natural that my husband should communicate with me about his business matters and speak to me of his children?"
- "True: I had not thought of that," I murmured. We spoke on other subjects; but within myself I reflected a good deal.

"Do you answer your husband's letters?" I said to her at last.

Fanny turned pale again, hesitated once more, and showed some slight signs of impatience. Then she assumed an air of indifference.

- "I reply as seldom as possible."
- "Ah! And tell me, what do you write to him?"
- "I don't know. I write coldly to him. We speak of business. It is not very interesting."

I in turn felt myself embarrassed, but I was unable to restrain myself.

- "How is it that it never occurred to you to show me your husband's letters?"
- "Roger! Roger!" she exclaimed, smiling in a constrained fashion, "I think you are going mad. Can a woman entrust her husband's business secrets to anyone, even to him whom she loves best of all?"
  - "That is true again," I murmured.

Fanny at once sought to profit by the advantage that she had just gained.

"İ should be very happy," she said, "to be able to show you the letters you think so much

about. They would prove to you that you are wrong in fearing anything. Understand, suspicious spirit, that it would be impossible to be less united than are my husband and myself."

- "Really!"
- "How can you imagine the contrary, now that I have confided my sorrows to you?"
- "Formerly you used also to confide the secrets of your family affairs to me; do not forget that, Fanny."
  - "Oh, it is very different now!"
  - " Why so?"
  - "Because—well, I know why."

Thereupon I reflected again. We both looked at each other—she shrugging her shoulders and raising her hands with an expression of pity, I once more grown as gloomy as death. At last, beginning to walk about, for I could not keep still, I said:

- "If you speak truly, Fanny, why do you not show me the letters that you address to him?"
- "It is not possible. Reading mine, you would understand his."

"Still, I should greatly like to know the tone of your letters. Why not write to him on the spot, just here? You will speak to him of everything except what you do not wish me to know. I will post the letter myself. I beseech you, Fanny, since you are sure of yourself, give me this proof of confidence to reassure me, for I suffer greatly."

But, she replied again, "It is not possible."

And she assumed an offended air.

Then I gave free rein to the passion that was devouring my heart.

"What is it you write to him that you do not want me to know? Have you sworn to kill me? Speak, if you have a shadow of pity in your soul! You are torturing me like an executioner."

She got up, and taking my hand, said softly:

"Roger, I should not like to give you pain."

"Why!" I said, turning white, "could you give me more? Go! You are a double-faced woman, and you have never loved me."

She threw herself upon my neck on hearing this unjust speech; but, in spite of the kisses with which she stifled my lips, I continued to speak,

- "How could your letters give me pain, seeing that you have been at variance ever since that horrible dispute?"
- "Now be reasonable; can a woman remain at variance with her husband?"
- "What!" I cried, releasing myself abruptly from her arms; "you have actually forgiven him?"
- "Not exactly," she said, dropping upon a seat; but I have found it necessary to accept his excuses. This time, however, I shall not forget past outrages, you may be sure of that."
  - "You have forgiven him!"

Thus I exclaimed as I stood in front of her, while she gazed at me in astonishment.

"So you are devoid of self-respect? You are insensible to insults? You are a coward? You love him? You have lied to me? Ah! I should never have believed it of you!"

She remained dumb; I resumed:

- "Just tell me why for so long a time you concealed from me that he used to insult you?"
- "I did not wish to dishonour him," she replied, "If you had a little more experience,

you would not be at all astonished at what happens. However, I do not want to speak of it any more. It concerns no one but myself. Let it be sufficient for you to know that if he allows me scarcely any freedom, and if his bursts of passion lead him to say base things, he is always sorry for them when his anger is past. I can assure you that you misjudge him. In the first moment of indignation I may have exaggerated the facts."

"Be silent!" I exclaimed, "if you have any shame, be silent! You do not seem to suspect that in proportion as you speak, some poisoned feeling strives within me with my love. Not another word! I accept even that, because I am vile, because I am a craven, because I love you too well, because I cannot refrain from loving you; but be quite sure of this: you could not have caused me more pain. Oh! I beseech you, not another word!"

I had flung myself upon my knees before her.

"It would be too cruel an experience to despise you,"

# CHAPTER LXI.

WHENEVER Fanny and I had had one of these deplorable discussions we used to part with coldness, and when she was gone I spent entire days in inwardly renewing the arguments with my remembrance of her. I repeated my assaults and her arguments, and I vainly sought to fathom the secret motive of her behaviour. I was too young and too inexperienced; I misjudged her. It seemed to me that this complex nature of hers, combining in her temperament several different temperaments, ought to contemplate matters absolutely like myself. I did not know then that the words "feeling," "love," "refinement," "jealousy," and many others represented certain ideas to

her and different ideas to myself; I was not aware that what would have been painful to me was not painful to her; and that goodness of intention was always, in her eyes, sufficient to excuse her for any deed, no matter what it might be. In short, I took no account of her weakness. I have since learnt to know it.

The more I exerted myself to detach Fanny rom her husband, the closer I rendered ties that had been stretched by fifteen years of mutual existence. Fanny inwardly pitied me; but I could not but be burdensome to her. I was quite aware that I was importuning her, but I was unable to refrain from driving her behind each entrenchment where she posted herself in order to hold out against me. I did not so much as suspect that a change of tactics was the only means of attaining my end. No one had shown me that it was indispensable to conceal my jealousy as being the principal cause that was to alienate my mistress from me. Nay, in the tokens of this jealousy I saw proofs of a love that must surely touch her, It would,

nevertheless, have been simpler to make her life so peaceful a one as to compel her to the drawing of comparisons—always to my advantage—between the two men on whom she depended.

It would have been much simpler also not to love her!

Did she love her husband? I do not believe She doubtless entertained towards him something of that common-place sentiment which results from habit, and which is pleasing to peaceful souls because it affords a natural continuation to things and does not weary the spirit. Moreover, she was touched on seeing this despot growing humane in her presence; and she experienced a kind of satisfaction in receiving endearments from the same hand that often chastised her with harshness. This did not proceed from cowardice on her part, nor from innate baseness of spirit, but from a certain slackness of temperament that was easy of explanation at her age. In short, Fanny had certainly not a virile, or even, perhaps, a very noble soul, for she was more inclined to use

stratagem than force, and she preferred to degrade herself by partition, rather than disorder her life; but she possessed equity of soul. She no doubt thought to redeem her conjugal faithlessness in her own eyes, by complete submission. It was a sort of compensation to her husband to endure the caprices of his temperament. In what shallows, in what abysses, in what medleys of unspeakable things, does that rare pearl, probity, seek to hide itself?

#### CHAPTER LXII.

MEANWHILE I was obliged to accept the fresh concession of the reconciliation between man and wife. But in concession after concession all my esteem was departing in tears. I submitted like a slave impotent to resist, with cries of secret rage and with vast longings for vengeance. Ah! if Fanny had known that she alone was to confess herself responsible for my abominable vengeance!

#### CHAPTER LXIII.

Enraged at my powerlessness to overcome the obstinacy of her character, I betrayed her. I sought in debauchery to slay both my jealousy and my love. I defiled myself voluntarily, knowingly, with the contact of the impure lips of senseless luxury. Every evening, like a robber lying in wait at the corner of a street, I took my place in cold blood and with frightful self-mockery, in the infamous haunt where I expected, by sheer force of will, to quench my thirst for vengeance. Still smiling bitterly, as dupers do at the thought of the credulity of their dupes, I took with me to my mistress's arms the hideous recollection of the degraded creatures whose vain

endearments had failed to weary my animosity; and so I found means to compromise Fanny with myself without any suspicion of the fact on her part, and to immerse her with myself into the same abominable pollutions.

But I was a thousand times more ashamed on my return than I had been blinded by passion on my departure. I wrung my fists in the streets and tore my hair in despair. More jealous, more infatuated, more closely linked, ill-avenged, chastised myself and by myself, I felt overwhelmed by my deep conviction of the uselessness of my efforts. A sort of physical disgust rose to my lips. I abhorred myself. During the entire night I roamed at random, like some shelterless wretch, hoping to subdue the torment of my brain by the weariness of my body. Leaning on the parapets of bridges, I watched the dark waters of the Seine whirling beneath me. less dark and less miry, however, than the thoughts stirring in my despairing mind. I trampled in the mud as though to obliterate, by palpable pollutions, the impalpable yet real

pollution that was now defiling my love. And ever before me, gliding like a phantom, amid the shadows that intersected the lengthened streets, I could see Fanny's image, with her calm air, her tranquil brow, and her surprised eyes, seeking as it were to provoke me still further by compelling me to be occupied about her at the very moment when I was asking myself whether I should not at last kill myself in order to forget her. Oh! horrible state which afforded neither repose nor truce to my agonies, which stimulated me and overwhelmed me, which, burying my despair in disgust, blasted my jealousy without appeasing it!

# CHAPTER LXIV.

A CERTAIN fundamental courage supported me, nevertheless. The struggles that I waged with myself kept me in exercise. I was resolved to seek the cure of my disease until I found it, and determined, did I fail to discover it, to essay some desperate enterprise, in order to carry Fanny off in spite of herself. It is too little known what ravages a settled idea may work in a brain. Insensibility leads you to contemplating with happiness things that would shock the least scrupulous consciences.

After ripe reflection I made up my mind to the painful sacrifice of the last concession. I was like a patient who, understanding at last that he is incurable, comes to terms with his malady and arranges to suffer as little as possible during the remainder of his days.

"I forgive you everything," I said to my mistress. "I will speak to you no more on our everlasting subjects of discord; I will no longer investigate your conduct or probe your feelings. I grant you everything, I accept everything, apart from this abominable position which has caused me so much pain, and which has lasted only too long. I will have no more of it. I had rather that you were unhappy; I had rather see you dead; I had rather die. Be loyal to me, I beseech you," I added, sadly, "for it hurts me dreadfully to mistrust you."

"Well, there will be no more partition," replied Fanny, pressing my hand; "do not be anxious or pained any longer. On my husband's return I shall take advantage of the pretext afforded by his last insults to lay my own conditions upon him. I shall live in his house in total separation from him. And this shall be for life. So, be reassured, Roger; be happy at

last. It is not my fault that you were not so before now."

"You are giving me back my life!" I said, throwing myself at her feet and clasping her knees in my arms.

"Dear child!"

"Let us bind each other by an oath!"

This made her smile; but she swore solemnly, her hands in mine, and her gaze fathoming my eyes.

"And now," I cried, "if from any motive you think that you ought for once to break your word, swear, swear again that you will warn me of it, so that there may be no treachery between us."

- "Upon what will you have me swear?" she said.
- "Upon my life."

She smiled afresh; but she swore solemnly.

From that time I felt reassured. My jealousy continued with me like the recollection of a dream that barely disturbs us from time to time. I became calm again. Life once more appeared to me broad and fair. I had confidence.

# CHAPTER LXV.

For this reason the husband's return caused me no more annoyance than inevitably resulted from the diminished frequency of my interviews with his wife. Summer had returned; Fanny was again living at her country house, and I saw her sometimes in the evening in the summer-house in the park, and oftener in my own home at Paris, when she had discovered some pretext for spending a day in town. She seemed to have somewhat more freedom than she had had in the past—at least, she often prolonged her visits; but she appeared more anxious and thoughtful than ever. I attributed her disquietude to the annoyances which must be caused to her by

respect for her promise. I thought that she was rendered unhappy by fresh disputes and fresh torments, and pitying her from my heart, I encouraged her to resistance, and comforted her as best I might. But she shook her head, sighed, and often kissed me with a brushing of her lips, as though her love had grown cold.

It was ordained that everything in our intrigue should be of a strange nature, and that I should never understand the behaviour of the woman I loved. Just as I thought that I was discerning the cause of her renewed sadness—by attributing it to the dissension which respect for her oath must have produced—I learnt a fact which again plunged me deeper than ever into a sea of uncertainties.

Since I had recovered repose of mind, I had lived a less solitary life. My friends had returned to me on seeing that I had returned to them. I was again beginning to take an interest in society. One day I heard to my great surprise that semiscandalous rumours were afloat concerning my mistress's husband. During his last trip to

2U2 FANNY.

England, people said, he had been captivated by an Irishwoman, who had just made her début at the Queen's Theatre; he had taken her off the boards, and had summoned her a month before to come to him in France. People exclaimed about the magnificence with which he had surrounded her. For the rest, she was very handsome, tall and slender like Fanny, but dark, as are the daughters of the north, with a beautiful pink complexion, and fine silken hair that fell languishingly in long ringlets to the rising of her bosom.

Enchanted by this news, I ingenuously resolved to communicate it to Fanny, in order to strengthen her in her resistance and to provide her with a terrible argument against our enemy if he still continued to torment her. But a fresh surprise was in store for me, and one which was to surpass all others by a prodigious height. Like many other women, Fanny, while deceiving her husband, did not wish him to deceive her. Provoked by my air of triumph, she believed neither in the truth of the story nor in the sincerity of my attempted proof.

"Either you have been the dupe of a lie," she said to me, "or you have carefully fabricated this tale in order to grieve me. What you tell me gives me great pain. I am so hurt by the coarseness of your feelings that, whatever you may now do, I shall never be able to forgive you. Know that my husband still loves me. The sorrow that he feels at our separation shows me this only too clearly. I am loyally observing the oath that you extorted from me. You in turn should spare my susceptibility by ceasing to calumniate a man whom I am making unhappy through your own fault."

My astonishment was so great that it did not so much as occur to me to make any reply to these strange words. Fanny mortified me cruelly by speaking to me of "her susceptibility," "the oath extorted from her," and of my "fictitious calumny," in reference to the very genuine infidelity of the man whom I detested. According to my thought, she ought to have shown herself happy at hearing that he was at last voluntarily withdrawing from her, just as she had long since

withdrawn from him. I was looking for deeds of thanks, and, lo! I had struck upon hidden wrath, grievously-wounded pride, and, finally, reproaches which, in my eyes, had all the appearances of jealousy. It was enough to make me lose my reason.

# CHAPTER LXVI.

FRESH suspicions occurred to my mind. They were a thousand times more cruel than all those from which I had previously suffered; but this time it was not easy for me to accept them with docility. Distrust had just bitten me like a viper, and the germ of the poison that it had deposited within me was circulating through all my veins. My more ardent jealousy was transformed on its reawakening. The single excuse that was capable of somewhat allaying it was annihilated for ever. It was now no longer of partition, but of the most cowardly treachery that I accused my mistress. I then resolved at all costs to clear up my doubts. I said nothing to Fanny; I

appeared to be devoid of suspicion. My countenance lied like my speech. A perfect actor, I affected the utmost freedom of mind at the very time that I had death in my heart.

For the first time in my life, I acted like a By myself, and by myself alone, I did all that was needful for the discovery of the truth. Under a fictitious name, I purchased the country house adjoining Fanny's. I secretly took up my abode in it. Crouching behind my window-shutters, I listened daily to the slightest sounds coming from the neighbouring house, and I looked at every creature crossing its threshold, as though I expected to see some stranger coming to rob me of the woman who was my happiness. At night, I glided through the fence of shrubs which separated the two parks, and wandered beneath Fanny's windows like a burglar studying the dwelling which he has resolved to enter. I thus came to know all the habits of the family upon whom I was spying. The times of their rising, of their meals, of their going to bed, became familiar to me. In the morning I used to see the servants opening the doors and windows, and hear the noise of the furniture as it was being moved about in order to arrange the bed-rooms and drawing-room. About eight o'clock the master used to come down to smoke in the park, where he met his children. At nine Fanny at last appeared, in negligent country dress. She used to take a few turns with them. At eleven, the breakfast bell rang. At noon, the brougham was in waiting at the door. The husband went out, and did not return until seven o'clock to dinner.

During the afternoon I often saw my mistress seated at the foot of an enormous tree that covered a large area with its shadow, talking with her children, reading, or occupying herself with some piece of needle-work. She received numerous visits. From three to six, when it was fine, there was nothing round the lawn but a long string of equipages, the horses of which pawed the gravel and champed their bits in the shadow of the trees, while groups of youthful ladies and attendant gentlemen sat on wickerwork

chairs, chatted, laughed and drank iced beverages. All these people went off towards evening, the men caracoling beside the carriage doors, or else grouped in the rear of the vehicles, smoking cigars and proceeding at a slow pace. Fanny did the honours with charming grace; she often changed her style of dress, and from my window I could see that the women especially were greatly attracted by her delicious attire. For her own part, she paid no heed to it, as though she had always been dressed without being aware of the fact. She went out but little in the evening, except when the heat was very great. Then her husband always walked with her; but most usually he went back to Paris at about eight o'clock, returning, if at all, not until very late at night.

On the days when Fanny came to Paris to see me, she used to go in the brougham with her husband.

"Which of us is she deceiving?" I would ask myself.

I used to ride rapidly on horseback by crossroads, so as to arrive home before her, and when there I was always as little interrogatory as she was full of thought. She was so everywhere, with me as well as in her own house. Simultaneously I had a watch kept on all her husband's footsteps. He never went anywhere except to the club or to see his mistress. Sometimes he spent the night with the latter. He talked freely of her to his friends, and continued to prove himself very lavish towards her. Not a suspicion, not an anxiety, tormented him; he was rich; he had handsome children and an adorable mistress. What did he lack? I envied him.

But I could not rest satisfied with being a spectator of the external life of the household with the secrets of which I was desirous of becoming acquainted. Finding at the end of a fortnight that my espionage taught me nothing, I grew weary of it. I had barely obtained the right of supposing that Fanny was keeping her word from the fact that her husband when walking with her, appeared to be taken up exclusively with his children. The frequency, moreover, of the visits that she received prevented

me from seeing her given up to herself as much as I should have wished. I resolved to introduce myself into her house without her knowledge. She had come to display disquieting coldness towards me. She was abstracted. Often, with insupportable emotion I saw her from a distance, when she believed herself alone, fall upon a bench and hide her tear-bathed face in her pockethandkerchief. In a week my suspicions had increased a hundredfold.

### CHAPTER LXVII.

IT was on a beautiful night in August that I put into execution the cruel plan, the outcome of which was to decide my destiny. I do not know what time it was, but the stars had diffused their soft brightness over the heavens long before. I opened the last window on the first story of my house, which was contiguous to Fanny's. I fastened the blind against the wall; I grasped the balcony-railing of the adjoining house; I set one foot on the ledge of the balcony and then the other: I strode across the railing. I was in their home.

At first I stood motionless, listening to the silence, which was disturbed only by the hurried

beatings of my heart. Beside me an illuminated window bleached the darkened wall of the house like a great square of light. Falling upon my knees, I first perceived that this window was not completely closed. The edges of the two sashes were laid one upon the other and touching, but they suffered a slender stream of light to pass between them. Two white muslin curtains, stretching in front of the panes, permitted me to see the whole room through a medium of milky colour, which had the effect of toning down objects somewhat.

I can still recollect it all. At the back of the room stood a large open bed, surmounted by a carved ebony crown, from which hung the brown stuff curtains showing in relief against the whiteness of the sheets. In front of the bed a narrow carpet, to the right a chest of drawers, near the fireplace a roomy leathern chair with a very high back. There were, I believe, other pieces of furniture as well, but I did not look at them.

At first I saw nobody in the room. A large lamp, capped with its green shade, lit it up irregu-

larly, throwing down the light upon the floor and leaving the ceiling in darkness. The bed was thus intersected in the direction of its length by the zone of light. As I was bending to the panes to see whether it was occupied, ashadow passed slowly between the lamp and the window, and was projected upon the white curtains. My heart beat more loudly; I drew back a little, and flattened myself upon the surface of the flagstone.

I recognised him. It was he; I can see him still. The warm breath of the August night sighed round me through the foliage; a bird was singing in a bush; balmy scents were rising from the earth; but I saw, I discerned, I felt nothing but him. Stretching out my neck so as to bring my eye to the partial opening of the window, I gazed at him in dumb astoundment, as though it were an extraordinary thing to me to see him standing in a room in his own house. He had broad, yellow morocco sandals on his naked feet; a pair of very loose white flannel trousers were girt about his waist. With hared breast, opened collar, and shirt-sleeves rolled up to his elbows,

he was pacing to and fro in the room, smoking a cigar, winding up his watch, looking at himself in the mirror and stretching his arms. He sat down at last in the large leathern chair, crossed one leg over the other, and, rocking it a little, allowed his sandal to drop.

I looked at him for a long time. He was reflecting. From my position I could see perfectly the sole of his naked foot, which was brought to a level with my eye, and his muscular arm, which was extended over the side of the chair. The other arm came and went from his knee to his face as he carried to his lips the cigar, the fragrant fumes of which were exhaled in my direction.

Suddenly he turned his head towards a door, which I had not yet seen, placed at the foot of the bed. This door was open, and in the dark frame which it described at the back of the room I, mistrusting my reason, perceived a dimly-outlined form lit up in front by a candlestick which she carried in her hand.

Powers of heaven! it was she. Good God!

thou didst not strike me down at the sight of her! She entered slowly, placed her lighted candle on the drawers, and, passing through the whole room in the direction of its length, proceeded towards her husband, who was looking quietly at her, without making any attempt to rise.

She was half dressed in that negligent costume which I had sometimes seen her wear in the morning, when taking a turn in the park with her children after leaving her bedroom. It was a very loose dress of blue cashmere, open in front, so as to show amid flaky cambric the rising of her breast. Her bare arms issued from broad sleeves. Her carelessly-knotted hair strayed over her rounded cheeks and sank softly in great clusters over the back of her neck, while on her countenance she wore her everlasting look of placid purity.

But for what purpose was she coming into this room at such an hour? Who had asked her to do so? How was it that the recollection of her lover had failed to restrain her on the threshold? She did not appear even to be aware that she had

taken any oath, or that throughout the world there existed for her an individual man other than that one who, still seated in her presence, was looking at her with a calmness equal to her own.

A gleam of hope shot across my soul, but it was only a gleam. Sinking upon hands and knees, while my breath tarnished the pane, I could feel my arms quivering as though the stone were trembling beneath me. A cold, acrid sweat of agony bathed my face and limbs; my teeth chattered in my mouth; swooning, I fell upon my breast, like an oak felled by a last stroke from the axe. Nevertheless, I could distinguish words, and gathering all my strength I raised myself again upon my knees and fists.

Then I saw that she was walking to and fro in the room like one who feels herself at home. She touched the objects lying on the furniture in a purposeless, abstracted fashion, as she had often done at my rooms. Her husband was still looking at her. They were talking, but I was too deeply moved to hear anything but a slight murmur. She was walking round about

him, calm and false, with her soft blue eyes, and her air of meaningless simplicity. At times she half smiled a faint smile. This smile, which relaxed her lips, but did not light up her expression, appeared to me to be somewhat forced. She was neither anxious, nor dreamy, nor moved. She was perfectly at ease, natural too, and tranquil as ever. She was well aware that the most attractive characteristic that she possessed was her provoking tranquillity.

Her husband, in his turn, began to smile. I could see the gleaming of his white teeth. He appeared to be defending himself good humouredly against an accusation which she was bringing against him, not with anger, but with bantering malice, which was devoid neither of contempt nor of pride. They were arguing so peaceably that neither of them seemed to believe in the reality of their familiar dispute. At last the husband's expression kindled feebly beneath his square brow, and as she was passing once more in front of him, brushing his broad, naked foot with her dress, he appeared to make up his mind, set his

foot to the ground and into his sandal, and drawing her quietly by the waist without encountering any resistance on her part, made her sit down upon his knee.

Then it was that I began to weep. Upon my\* cheeks and upon my lips, the hot tears my evelids were unable to restrain fell in silence. I understood it all at last: I could see the profanation, though I fain would not have seen it; I asserted that it was not a dream, although I would have willingly have doubted it. I cannot express the breaking away of my better part within me, nor the pain that was caused me on seeing the woman whom I worshipped surrendering herself to the arms of another. She remained seated with both hands crossed upon her knees, and, looking at her husband, continued to talk with calmness. Nothing on earth could have been so chaste as the simplicity of her attitude, as the purity of her profile, as the expression in her blue eyes. On his part, he held her in his arm which was curved about her waist, and carelessly caressed her cheek with

the hand that was free. At last she laid her bent arm upon his shoulder, and turned indolently towards him. I then could see her from behind; her hair was falling down her back, and her dress was spread out upon the floor in splendid shamelessness. Oh, what an execrable creature, full of grace and listlessness, sinking upon that manly shoulder!

"It is not possible!" my conscience cried out;
"it shall not be!"

But bringing his thick lips close to her pure cheek, the other kissed her and whispered a few words in her ear. She made a gesture of dissent several times with her head, without blushing. He insisted with smiles, in politeness; and she, resisting gradually, surrendered herself! Cruel woman! how she prolonged my torture! Their dumb debate lasted for some time. I do not know how it came to pass that her girdle was suddenly loosed and fell amid the folds of her dress. I was still weeping. She rose at last, this woman of light and flowers, and, with a single movement of her shoulders and arms,

made her dress slip to her feet on the ground. I fell back upon my knees, clasping my hands, asking for mercy. She quickly released her feet from the heap of materials, and, a little pale this time but speechless, moved towards the bed, holding her last coverings upon her breast. How many times had I seen her grow pale in this way! I tore my cheeks with my nails. Her husband had slowly followed her.

And not a weapon about me! I longed forthwith to cut her throat, to rend her, to plunge my arms into the senseless woman's heart. The whole of her blood would not have sufficed to pay for my abominable torture. Breathless, like a tiger that sees a lion lay claws upon his prey, I had risen to my feet, I had pushed aside the window, and with nails clenched upon my teeth, and face covered with sweat, I gazed, sobbing and stamping, into the room without discerning anything but what was horrible. And I cried:

"Pity! Pity! It shall not be! I will not have it!"

Meanwhile, beside myself and tottering, I had
taken a step forward; but then my hair stood on
end, and my eyes were opened wide, while my
keen gaze pierced like a sword beneath the dark
curtains and enabled me at last to see. I tried
to advance; I was no longer able to do so;
some kind of power that desired to punish
me had nailed my heels to the flagstone, and
was making me burst forth into laughter.

tried to advance, for I had heard sighs, and I wanted to know from which mouth they were proceeding. With a prodigious effort of all my muscles, I succeeded in removing my shoulder from the wall and made one step more; but all my blood flowed suddenly back into my swollen heart, and, losing my balance, I fell like an inert mass upon the balcony.

### CHAPTER LXVIII.

When I recovered consciousness the window was dark and closed. I passed my hands over the panes without being able to make them yield. I traversed the balcony throughout its length: all was dark, and shut, and sleeping. A cold passion possessed me. At all costs I wanted to see again the woman whom I abhorred with all my heart, with all my senses, with all my soul, with my entire being. But how make my way to her? I hung by both hands to the railing and let myself drop into the garden. Twenty times I made the circuit of the house, pushing against all the doors to force them; but I was too weak. At last I rolled in the dust,

and there, hiding my face in my hands, I began to sob.

"Betrayed! betrayed!" I said to myself, with despairing monotony; "and the world has not fallen in upon us!"

Suddenly I got up, and, without giving a thought to anything further, darted swiftly through the night, as though I had assassins at my heels. I traversed the whole park, I cleared the fence, I crossed the road, I entered the fields, and still running straight before me, bareheaded, weeping, talking to myself, dashed along like an unhappy deer that draws after him the fierce pack hanging by their fangs upon his flanks.

Whither I was going I did not know. I was fleeing from the sight of it. I was running at full speed as far away as possible, that I might no longer see the frightful image which had remained within my eyes.

"Betrayed! betrayed!" I cried breathlessly, in order to stimulate myself to speed.

I fell into holes. I got up again, bruised and covered with sweat and mire, and once more set

forward at random amid terrifying darkness. I flung myself headlong into thorny hedges; I left fragments of my clothing behind me and passed Invisible branches checked me suddenly, striking me upon the breast; brushwood lashed my face and shoulders; I paused, weeping; then I continued to walk quickly forward. passed by deserted village streets that echoed to my footsteps; by cultivated fields where the corn undulated round my legs like waves; by hills, and woods, and streams, and paths, and roads, that filed round me as though the ground had been caught with myself into the whirl of a mighty wheel. I could no longer breathe and I was still running; I was still weeping, I was still speaking.

"O, my mother!" I cried, "if you but knew how I am suffering!"

Suddenly I found myself with my feet in water. In front of me stretched a broad, black area, gliding uniformly through the shadow from right to left, with lengthened and mysterious whisperings. The moon, throwing her silver reflection

aslant upon this gleaming surface, seemed an enormous serpent proceeding towards me to swallow me. A mist was enwrapping me. stumbled forward over the stones, but the waterv sheets of the rapid river hindered me from walking. An abominable temptation seized me. looked at the peaceful sky, where the soft star of lovers was shining amid the moveless clouds: I pressed my hand long upon my heart, and advanced still further. The water was rising to my knees, but I still felt the miry ground about my trembling feet. At last, unable to proceed any further, and overwhelmed with emotion and fatigue, murmuring a name, and sobbing like a woman, I sank down and rolled into the water, which ran swiftly and choppily along its darkened course.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

I HAD no knowledge of what took place after that. A horrible coldness had engulfed me. Hissing sounds were rending my ears. I was choking. Several times I got upon my knees and was ever carried away by the weight of the waters. At last I became oblivious to everything; I thought that I was dying.

When I again found myself in life, I was in my own bed with my head on fire. I opened my haggard eyes. All my limbs were trembling. A horrible fever was shaking my body from neck to toe. Two friends were beside me, and looking at me. I spoke. They shook their heads. A man came and touched me on the arm. He shrugged

his shoulders and went away. I again began to tremble between my sheets. This lasted for several days.

I afterwards learnt that some fishermen had seen me lying in the morning in a swoon on the brink of the Seine, my feet in the water and my head lying back in the mud. They searched me, found a letter in my note-book, and brought me home to Paris. On the way I was delirious. They thought that I was mad. And I was.

Meanwhile Fanny, who knew nothing, and was astonished at not seeing me, came one morning, but my valet stopped her with tears on the threshold, and told what he knew.

"He tried to drown himself," he said to her, "and now he is mad."

But she would not believe in the suicide, and besought admittance. On that day an unspeakable weariness, as of corpses kept down in their coffins, held me riveted upon my back with outstretched arms and open eyes. Suddenly, in the framing of the door, which opened at the foot of my bed, I perceived a human figure, which

remained standing without venturing to advance. I did not know at first what woman it was who, dressed in such elegant and fresh summer draperies, with bracelets on her arms and flowers in her bonnet, was thus coming to see me, now at the point of death; and I did not understand why she had gathered the folds of her white veil across her face, and was holding them with both hands as though to prevent them from falling aside. My friends had risen, and were standing at the back of the room, in order, as much as possible, to respect a secret that it was sought to hide. The woman meanwhile advanced towards me, and I could hear the rustlings of her dress. She bent over my bed, and raised her veil with both hands. It refreshed my soul to see this fresh countenance, fashioned of graces and, as it were, perfumed with health. thus bending down over my face.

"Fanny!" I cried suddenly, raising my arms.

She sank sobbing upon my breast. But memory had come back to me with recognition, and striking her on the forehead with my closed fists, I shook her from me, crying out like a lunatic, "Begone from here!"

She thought that I was still mad, and turned away in tears; but recovering a remnant of strength in my wrath, I struck her again on the shoulder, and springing out of bed, I fell upon her, and rolled on the ground at her feet.

## CHAPTER LXX.

When reason returned, I besought my guardians with clasped hands not to allow that woman into my house again. But, incapable of suspecting anything of what had happened, and still believing in my madness, she returned every day—so I have since been told—and every day, wringing her hands, she asked to see me.

"The doctor has forbidden it," replied my inflexible servant.

Then she offered gold and jewels. But when she at last understood that the sight of her might kill me, she went away praying God to save me, and offering Him her own life in exchange for mine. I knew nothing of this at the time. The days passed, and, thanks to the attentions with which I was surrounded, life gradually, to my misfortune, flowed in upon me, and drove the fever away.

## CHAPTER LXXI.

At the end of six weeks I was fully convalescent. My friends had already left me. Several times my servant asked me whether I would at last receive the lady who appeared to be so fond of me and the sight of whom had one day done me so much harm. But I always shook my head and exclaimed:

"I shall discharge you, if you let her in."

Nevertheless, the desire to see her once more gradually became settled within me, and at last grew to an irresistible necessity. I induced my anxious servant, who could make nothing of my coldness, to talk. He told me everything of which I had hitherto been ignorant: she used to

call every day, and he did not know what to say in order to prevent her from coming in.

"If she calls to-day," I murmured suddenly, with a blush, "I will see her."

I felt moved, as though some fatal hope were essaying to spring up again within me. Depressed by sickness, I had lost nearly all my anger, but an intense sorrow had invaded me, and I thought, so disgusted was I with everything, that I could not continue to live. I did not think of the horrible night on which the betrayal had risen up before me, save as of a evil dream. I still loved and at the same time despised the graceful and perfidious woman whose image never left me. I was waiting for a confused something which would put an end to it all.

Buried in a large easy-chair beside my window, I was beginning with closed eyes to review in my mind what I wished to say to the traitress, when I felt myself taken by the hand, and tears and kisses blending upon it. I opened my eyes. She was on her knees at my feet, pale but stil beautiful—too beautiful!—looking at me with

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eloquent tenderness. A perfume rose from her to me. We did not speak. I began to weep.

She got up, embracing my head maternally with both her bare arms and kissing my forehead and hair. I yielded myself to her, because it seemed sweet to me to receive these caresses which I was entitled to receive so long as I had not spoken. That was why I did not speak. At last, as I was still weeping and did not kiss her, she said:—

"Is your love gone, Roger?"

"Not yet," I replied, hiding my face in my hands.

But she did not understand, and stood anxiously before me.

I looked at her. I was surprised.

"I beseech you, Fanny, tell me that it is a dream, or that I am mad. Tell me that I am not to hate you, for it gives me too much pain."

She did not blush; she did not turn pale. True as light, perhaps, in her own estimation, she caressed me softly; she seemed astonished.

But, collecting all my strength, I raised her

charming figure in my arms and made her sit down in front of me.

- "I know all," I said to her.
- "What? What do you know?"
- "I have seen all."
- "But what?"
- "Why have you betrayed me?" I cried. "You did not yield, for it was not he who went to you, but you to him; it was you who, by a base interchange of parts, went to him to seduce him."

She did not yet turn pale, and tried to speak. But, holding her with my eye, I continued, free from anger and as cold as steel:

"Must I tell you everything? I distrusted you. I bought the house next door to yours at Chaville—"

Here she grew pale and said:

- " Well?"
- "A night, a horrible night! I had been keeping watch on you for a fortnight in vain. At the risk of my life I succeeded in getting upon the balcony of your house. I do not know what

hour it was. Kneeling behind the window of your husband's room, I saw you. I saw everything, as I see you now. He was alone. You came in—"

"It is not so!" she cried, growing still more frightfully white.

She looked like a corpse seated in a chair in front of me.

"Must I go on?" I added. "You were wearing a dress of blue cashmere. Your hair was loose, and the gleaming of your naked bosom could be seen. Your feet played in your satin and lace slippers. Your arms were bare. Tranquil as ever, even at the moment when you are perjuring yourself, you did not curse him whom you came to gratify, for you have two hearts. Oh, Fanny! you love two men—him and me!"

She shook her head rapidly, and said in a low, voice:

"It is not so! It is not so! You do not know me!"

"Must I go on?" I added. "You reproached him for his faithlessness, which is very real. He defended himself with smiles. You passed a hundred times in front of him, for you wanted to fascinate him by your air of modesty, without his suspecting it. And you succeeded perfectly, for he drew you to his heart, and as you gave no thought to me who was at death's door on witnessing this, you allowed yourself to be taken upon his knees—"

"Enough!" she cried.

Then she remained dumb, looking at me. She appeared to be in horrible pain, but she did not weep. Her eyes were frightfully dilated and her dry lips were quivering. I cast down my eyes in pity for her. Nevertheless I added:

"Know that I remained there, I who worship you, and it would seem that shame and sorrow do not kill, for I saw everything, and I am not dead."

Like two statues made to hang over the edges of tombs, we were motionless, looking at each other. At last she said:

<sup>&</sup>quot;You must abhor me?"

<sup>&</sup>quot; Yes."

She wrung her hands. She got up. She stretched out her hands towards heaven. At last she threw herself upon me, as upon a prey, clasped me in her arms so as to almost stifle me, and, sinking down upon my knees and against my breast, sought my lips, and said:

"Well, I still worship you."

But rising, I threw her to the ground, and she remained there. Whelmed at my feet, her hair loose, her arms locked around my knees, she cried out with abundant tears:

"Mercy! Pardon! I had lost my senses! I was mad! But I still love you! Have pity on me!"

And she promised to submit to all that I might require. She herself proposed flight.

"Kill me rather than repel me. Crush me beneath your feet. I have been wrong, but do not drive me away. I love you. You are breaking my heart."

I raised her and made her sit down. She was ashamed now, and was hiding her face. But I felt pitiless. My passion had been kindled by

the narrative I had given of my torture. And so I left her there, the woman whose pride had so long impressed me. Nevertheless, she tried to do me violence, and stretched out both arms towards me; but with a gesture I flung them back upon her face.

"Know that I loathe you and that I worship you," I said to her. "Such is my punishment, for I have taken another man's wife, and I deserve to be punished. You are now nothing to me but a stain. You are an idol thrown down into the mire. I have seen you, you who are so chaste of posture, with your heavenly face and your childish eyes, I have seen you writhing grotesque and hideous, and crying out like a shewolf in the fangs of a hound. Be silent! You have done worse than the creatures to which that frightful man compared you. They do not lie!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;But he is my husband!" she said.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Have you no conscience? Answer frankly, if it is true that you are an intelligent being, and that your fatal action was directed by reflection. Who compelled you to go in quest of him?"

She made an immense effort, and replied in a shaking voice:

"I saw that he was becoming alienated from me. I have no love towards him since I love you; but I hold to him. Is that not natural? Divided between the desire to preserve his affection and the dread of being obliged to display a like affection towards him, I wish to retain him when he is drawing away, and, when he approaches again, I try in vain to escape him. I have yielded to duty. I feared that he might leave me. The thought of my children forsaken together with myself, drove me mad. Forgive me. The woman that he knew at London is the cause of it all. I need calmness; spare I have been wrong, for I love you, but I am only a woman. And you do not know women. You do not know that there is often honesty in their betrayals."

"And your oath?" I cried.

Again she wrung her hands.

"You speak falsely when you say that you yielded to your duty. You yielded only to pride.

It annoyed you to see yourself left by a man whom you do not love, who does not love you, who oppresses you, who despises and insults you. Did you not also yield to a thirst for abominable pleasure? I tell you, I heard everything."

At this moment we looked at each other. She became purple, essayed to fly, returned towards me and fell upon her knees.

"If you knew how much I detest myself! I should like to tear my heart from my body. My heart is pure. It would have always been enough for me to see you, to listen to you, to feel you beside me. It is because I love you that you are the only being who is not a man to me. I love nothing on earth but you. You are my life."

"You love me!" I cried in fury. "But how do you love me? Above me, in that pure heart of yours, there are vain worldly considerations, social reasons, dead-level habits,—your husband. Do not speak of your children! Moreover, what is a love that does not know the virtue of sacrifices,

that shrinks from anything whatsoever, that is limited, that has boundaries, that is not an unqualified surrender of the person, of all its thoughts, and affections, and duties, and virtues? To ruin yourself for one you love, to destroy your honour and the security of your future, to go as far as crime for him, and to torture your brain with seeking for proofs more lofty still, is not this the most radiant attestation of exclusive, intolerant. haughty passion? Love, you who were never aware of it, thinks of nothing, and makes reservation of nothing external to itself. It treads a sublime renegade upon the holiest things, drawing upon the happiness which it invents, and to which it affords the justification of its impossibility. But you! a woman of pitiful devotion, of narrowest virtues, of colourless duties, you treat all this as madness. It is too lofty for you; you can see nothing in it. What you love above all else is your house, your comfort, the luxury that surrounds you, the hollow esteem of the world, which cares as little about you as about any other person, the most trivial of relationships—a heap of

senseless things! You love me, you say? But would you endure to be forsaken by the world? I offered you the whole of my fortune; with happiness and voluntarily would I have givenyou everything; for you I would have robbed the poor. Well, would you accept the smallest annoyance in order to make me happy? Then do not further outrage love, that sovereign passion which will not suffer any voice save its own to murmur about its throne. You think you love me because you gave yourself to me? Go; I have seen all, I tell you. You were the same with him as with me. It cost you as little to pass from my arms to his as to change one dress for another."

She got up at last in despair and tried to go. But I stopped her, and, pushing her into the back of the room and leaning my back against the door, I folded my arms, and cried:

## "You shall hear all!"

And then I began to breathe hard, and, finding nothing further to say to her, I threatened her with my fists, stamping and shouting, while she

looked aside at me with unspeakable terror. At last speech sprang once more from my lips.

"I never believed in you. I felt so sure that you were deceiving me, that in my turn—unhappy man that I am!—I, too, sought to pollute our love. Learn, now, if you did not suspect it, that I, who worshipped you, have deceived you with the vilest of women."

But she did not believe me, and, doubtless attributing what I said to impotence of passion, she made a gesture of proud denial. Crushed with grief, my voice then, in spite of myself, became gentle and beseeching; all my anger fell beneath the weight of pity.

"Know then," I murmured, clasping my hands, "that I loved you at once as a mother, as a wife, and as a child. All the piety, and respect, and tenderness that love can comprise in a heart, all those enchanting things, too touching not to be divine, I felt towards you from the first day on which I saw you passing in your grace, in your sweet calm, in your beauty. Learn that I worshipped you devotedly; that I thought of you alone;

that you dwelt within me like a second soul: that I suffered more from your griefs than from my own; that, to remove any doubt from your mind, I would have laughed to give my life, which I esteemed only because it caused some pleasure to you. See, I am weeping! I loved you altogether—your children, your mother, your household, your attendants; the provoking errors of your temperament, your laces, and your dresses. I believe I loved him also, because his image blended ceaselessly in my mind with yours. I never loved my mother as I loved you. I would have forsaken her and all that I venerate for your sake. You were my eternal hope, my sweetest possession, the perfect image of pure things—"

"Mercy!" she said, falling again upon her knees.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Well, Fanny, for all that you trod upon this respect, this incomparable love. You trod upon my heart—"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mercy!" she said again.

<sup>&</sup>quot;You crushed my being as the impassive ox

crushes beneath his hoof the first flowers of the fields. And now, like a wretch who can love no one more, like an old man who has seen all that belonged to him die about him, I can feel no future remaining before me. All is withered and rotten in my heart. I am old! I am a hundred! I am going to die! I am a tomb! Yet you are well aware that I am quite alone upon the earth—"

"Mercy! pity!" she cried, writhing upon the furniture, and striking her head against the wall. "Do not tell me that you are unhappy!"

"Unhappy! That would not express enough. Language is without a word to denote what I am. Ungrateful one! It was not enough to take from me my thought, my heart, my life; you must also take what I love best in the world—yourself; ay, and more than yourself, respect for your person."

"Pity! pity!" she cried again.

"You have murdered my youth. Well, may you never feel what I feel: I worship you and I abhor you!"

Saying this, I sought to strike her and to kiss her simultaneously; but I rolled to the ground, and when at nightfall I opened my eyes again and groped in search of her through the silent room, I could no longer find her.

## CHAPTER LXXII.

On the following day, I felt sated with vengeance. I experienced that species of cruel serenity which follows upon supreme executions. I was at last satisfied, like the judge who holds in his hands irrefutable proof of the crime which he has punished.

Turning my thoughts to her, I did not compassionate her. Nevertheless, I could foresee with clearness all the heavy weariness of her existence.

"She will suffer for a long time," I said to myself, "then she will hate me. Chained again beneath the yoke, she will in vain try to bear it with courage. She is not formed for re-

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signation. Another will some day come to fill my place. If he does not love her, she will dismiss him with contempt. If he does love her, then the same contests, and deceptions, and tortures will begin again, and will pass through the same phases. As long as she lives, she will fatally pursue her chimera. The love-ideal that absorbs her will not be obliterated even by the snows of age; and when wrinkles come to prove to her that nothing is immutable here below, she will continue to evoke the phantom of a passion which has been and will still remain her torment. She will isolate herself from the world like soldiers upon whom the fire of twenty battles has palled. Detached from and sated with everything like them, she will go to the secret poem of her recollections for the emotions of a new life. The children whom she adores, will not comfort her. They will perhaps despise her!—Condemned to love for her own sake, she will never be able to satisfy herself or anyone. Powerless for good, the vain quest of the good will be her eternal martvrdom. She will always lack a vice in order

to be happy, while to make happy she will always lack a virtue. She has too much heart and too little courage."

Thus did I at last judge from a distance the woman whom I had now learnt to know at the expense of my happiness. I cannot say that I pitied her. Although I felt overwhelmed with weariness, I was, in a deadened fashion, still too angry to do so. I felt myself separated from her as though years and years had interposed their dense barriers between us; but she was still in existence to me.

The recollection of her had marked me like a burning iron. I was a love-convict, and could not obliterate the brand impressed upon my heart.

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

But if I did not compassionate her in judging her, it was not possible for me to turn back my thoughts upon myself without suffering in every fibre of my being. All the love, and filial affection, and pious tenderness, and respect that was within me was exhaled, as it were, in fumes and dissolved in tears, which I drank—bitter liquid that it was—on the cross upon which pitiless fate had nailed me. This love of mine struggled like a sturdy young child that has tasted of life and is not willing to die. This filial affection which I had naturally given her, owing to the difference between our ages; this pious tenderness with which she inspired me as with some

sweet thing; lastly, this respect which was as an agreeable incense to her; all this, all that was best in me, was melted within my heart and escaped slowly with caressings as of exhalations and perfumes.

Like a traveller surprised, on waking amid immense Asiatic steppes, by a mist floating close to the ground, I felt myself wavering in my resolutions, my prudence, my courage. Everything was astir about me and moving away in confused shapes; everything was taking to flight: charming memories, superfluous vows, tender longings, regrets, desires; everything was becoming lost in silence in the distance of my dreams, and leaving me alone in the midst of a vast space. And from this cloudy whirl of sensations, wishes, habits; from these impalpable oscillations of pains, and pleasures, and hopes, prolonged to the extreme limit of my range of vision, there finally issued a long phantom which rose, rose even to the sky, sadly wrapped in a pale shroud. phantom I recognised by the desolation printed upon its dull face, by the apathy of its attitude,

by its muteness, by the bitter smile that hovered about its discoloured lips. Alas! once before I had seen it wax before me, and I had felt myself shuddering with it in the coverings of its windingsheet. I was twenty years old; I had just lost my mother, and, from her freshly stirred grave, icy solitude exhaled and gulfed me in its arms.

I wept. Everything about me spoke of her. I forgot all the wrong that she had done me. She had left a thousand traces; she was still present in the room which formerly I used to arrange lovingly for her reception. Beneath the ceiling which had so often sheltered her; upon the carpets which she had so often trodden; among the furniture which her dress had brushed, she appeared to me still, placid and consoling. Here the easy chair in which she had so often sat opened towards me its velvet arms; there the cushion upon which she used to set her feet retained the soft impress of her elegant boot; there the flowers that she loved were sadly shedding their leaves in their china vases; there waved the curtains which she had so often raised

with the tip of her timid finger; there was still in motion the pendulum of the clock from which she used never to take her eyes; there was her veil; there were her letters, sweet reflections of herself; there was her comb, made balmy by the perfume of her hair; and lastly, there, cold and closed like a tomb, stood the bed on which we had so often wept together.

All now came back in floods to my memory; all that we had said, all that we had thought, all that we had hoped. Like distant music borne on the breeze of the seas, I could hear her words sounding in my ears; like emanations from flowers set free by the dews of night, I could perceive in my nostrils the scent of her amber skin; and. like the breath of spring, the exhalations of her kisses passed across my lips. My hand, which she had touched, was burning; my brow, which she had so often buried in her bosom, was burning; my eyes, which she had worshipped, my mouth, which she had pressed, my breast, which she had doubled with her own, were burning. Oh! what pleasure I took in touching her letters, in smiling at her portrait! It seemed to me that I was still waiting for her; that all this had not happened, and that she was about to return to me, as in the early days, to sink, timorous as a woodland bird, upon my shoulder, and perfume my face with her freshness, while both her arms were clasped around my neck. But simultaneously I felt a vague something standing forth within me with sighs and sobs; a vast sorrowfulness filled me; an unspeakable lassitude paralysed all my thoughts. Musing as one does beside the bed of death, I said to myself: "All is over! We, who loved each other, shall never meet again!"

## CHAPTER LXXIV.

I was so heart-broken, that I was afraid of giving way. Thinking only of myself, her image seized upon me again. Unable to pluck her from my memory, I fled with this image, abruptly and without looking behind me, like an incendiary unwilling to hear the cries of malediction issuing from the flames kindled by his cruel hand. I set out without saying where I was going, in order to leave, to get away. I shuddered at my courage. But Memory went with me, and often as we passed along, Memory and I wept together.

One day, wearied with the sight of men, I left the beaten tracks, and entered towards the north upon the sands which border the mouth of the Loire. I walked for thirty hours without stopping. At last, towards evening, I set foot in a desert. There I resolved to bring it all to an end.

But I was unwilling to have it said that I had killed myself without reflection, like a madman or a child discouraged by strife. I therefore settled here in order to strive against myself, to reduce myself to despair, to learn whether a cure might be afforded me by a less common-place host than Death.

I have given myself a year to live a different life, isolated, meditative, austere. I have resolved upon nothing, except to wait until the end. Sometimes, with self-detestation, I again hope. I look for I know not what. I love more than ever the woman whose love has brought me here. I despise her no longer. I acquit her. I feel that I might perhaps have acted in the same manner had I been in her place, and I assert that those who would have acted differently are less worthy than she. Sometimes also I loathe her, and am angry with myself for not having stifled her. Thus I pass unceasingly from an

extreme of love and pity to an extreme of rage and hate. Oh, what torture it is to love!

My soul is nevertheless exhausted. My heart beats no longer. Now especially that, for my own gratification, I have just reviewed the drama of my life, I experience the horrible temptation to complete it by the addition of a bloody epilogue.

But why here rather than yonder with her? Because there is still left to me the modesty of a shy jealousy that would not be lamented. Just as the deer, when wounded to the death, seeks out a cave wherein to breathe in peace its last sigh, and to conceal its bones, so would I fain die, if die I must, in a desert far from the woman whom I have loved too well.

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